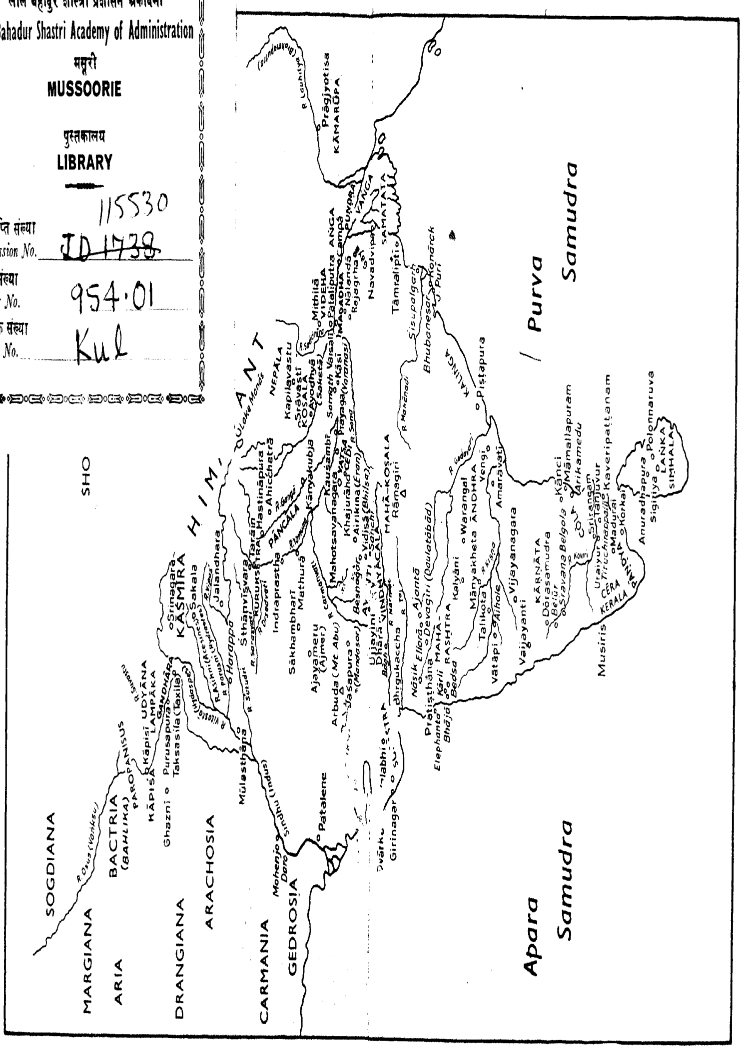

SOGDIANA
MARGIANA
ARIA
BACTRIA (BAHLIKA)
DRANGIANA
ARACHOSIA
CARMANIA
GEDROSIA
PAROPANISUS
KĀPIŚA
Ghazni
Purusapura
Takṣaśilā (Taxila)
GANDHĀRA
UDYĀNA
LAMPĀKA
KAŚMĪRA
Srinagara
Śakala
Jalandhara
Harappa
Mūlasthāna
Sindhu (Indus)
Patalene
Mohenjo Daro
HIMAVANT
Sthānvīśvara
KURUKṢETRA
Indraprastha
Hastināpura
Ahicchatra
PAÑCĀLA
Mathurā
Kānyakubja
Kauśāmbī
VATSA
Prayāga
Kāśī
KOSALA
Śrāvastī
Kapilavastu
NEPĀLA
Mithilā
VIDEHA
MAGADHA
Pāṭaliputra
Nālandā
Rājagṛha
ANGA
Campā
PUṆḌRA
VAṄGA
SAMATAṬA
Tāmralipti
Prāgjyotiṣa
KĀMARŪPA
Ujjayinī
AVANTI
VINDHYĀCALA
MAHĀ-KOŚALA
Sāñchī
Vidiśā (Bhilsa)
Bhṛgukaccha
Ajantā
Ellorā
MAHĀRĀṢṬRA
Nāsik
Pratiṣṭhāna
Kārlī
Bhājā
Elephanta
Girinagar
Dvārka
Valabhi
Arbuda (Mt. Abu)
Ajayameru (Ajmer)
Sākhambharī
KALIṄGA
Piṣṭapura
Bhubaneśvar
Konārck
Purī
Vengī
Amarāvatī
ANDHRA
Warangal
Kalyāṇī
Mānyakheta
Vātāpi
Aihole
Vijayanagara
Vaijayantī
KĀRṆĀṬA
Dorasamudra
Belūr
Śravaṇa Belgola
Kāñcī
Māmallapuram
Arikamedu
CŌLA
Tanjavur
Kaveripattanam
Madurai
Korkai
PĀṆḌYA
CĒRA
KERALA
Musiris
LAṄKĀ
SIMHALA
Anuradhapura
Polonnaruva
Sigiriya
Purva Samudra
Apara Samudra

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

by

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UNIVERSITY TEACHER
HISTORY AND ANCIENT INDIAN CULTURE
UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY

KARNATAK PUBLISHING HOUSE
BOMBAY 2

First Impression 1957
Second Impression 1959
(Revised)
Third Impression 1966
(Revised & Enlarged)

PRICE Rs. 10.00; shillings 21; $ 3.00

Printed by
B. G. DHAWALE
at KARNATAK PRINTING PRESS
& *published by him*
for KARNATAK PUBLISHING HOUSE
Karnatak House
Chira Bazar, Bombay 2

To

Kaka

(MY FATHER)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

A right understanding of the meaning and purpose of Indian History is the primary duty of every citizen of India, for history is to the patriot what the scriptures of his religion are to the devotee. Patriotism that does not feed upon history is like religion that rejects the help of the scriptures, rootless, fanciful and unreal. The two things that stand out prominently in the past history of the Indian people, amidst all the vicissitudes of fortunes through which they have passed, are their supreme sense of the Spiritual and the Eternal, on the one hand, and the absolutely constitutional and civic character of the genesis of their social organisation on the other. The spiritual sense supplied the *ideal* and constitutional freedom the *means* through which the ideal was sought to be realised. The life of the *spirit* was and is our national destiny and goal, and constitutional freedom, the way to it.

Prof. Kulkarni in his fascinating little book has kept up this point of view, so that the students might imbibe right ideals and cultivate right attitudes which will be a source of great strength and inspiration to India's growing national life. When one goes through the pages one gets impressed with the richness of her history in all that can contribute to the needs and happiness of the human race. Likewise, other things are brought into view. How much is there of the deepest interest in her long line of history, her rock-cut temples and other remains of antiquity! How she is the birthplace of the greatest religions of the world and

what important part she has played in the intellectual development of mankind!

Prof. Kulkarni has brought to bear his vast knowledge and experience on the facts of history, and has narrated them with insight, ease, alertness and force. In avoiding credulousness, rejecting myths and legends, and sifting testimony in a strictly critical manner, in order to favour a synthesis, the author has done well and has tried to rescue history from the purblind pedants who confound it with an unreflective and chaotic compilation of facts. Besides, there is a correct and just appraisal of the contribution of South Indian dynasties to the growth and glory of India's past.

The book is a comprehensive, lucid and accurate presentation of the history of India before the tenth century A.D. and nothing is omitted of value to a just appreciation of the currents of history. It is a valuable and useful guide not only to students of colleges, but also for the general reader. The author deserves every praise for the execution of a difficult task with commendable ability and skill. I hope the book will become popular with the students.

M. V. KRISHNA RAO
Professor Emeritus of History and Political Science, Mysore University.

Itihasa means past events accompanied by or aranged in the form of stories (*kathayuktam*), and conveying instruction in *dharma* (morals), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (salvation) i.e., the four ultimate ends of a human being.

— *Ancient Indian Definition*

PREFACE

STUDENTS of Ancient Indian History and Culture at the University are faced with a peculiar difficulty. Books recommended by the University, as well as other standard works on the subject, as every teacher of the subject knows, are far beyond the reach of the student. An attempt is made here to give a comprehensive and integrated picture of the ancient Indian life and society in a relatively smaller compass. In each chapter, the section on political history is supplemented by one on civilization dealing with the political, economic, social, religious and cultural aspects of life during the particular period. The ancient period is stretched to 1000 A.D. to fulfil the requirements of the University syllabus. Facts are illustrated with maps, figures and plates.

The facts, quotations, maps and figures are collected from a number of books, some of which are mentioned in the short bibliography. I am indebted to all the eminent authors of these works. The discussion of the subject with my graduate and post-graduate students has not only helped me to understand their needs but also to crystallise my own views on certain topics.

Naturally, by its very nature, a book of this type has no claims to originality. However, certain shifts of emphasis on facts and interpretations might reveal a new approach.

***   ***   ***

Bombay, Chaitra 1, 1879
22nd March, 1957

C. M. KULKARNI

THIRD EDITION

I am extremely happy to see the long-awaited appearance of the third, revised and enlarged edition of this popular book. As a matter of fact copies of the second edition were sold out soon after its publication. The new edition was inordinately delayed owing to certain unavoidable circumstances.

The whole text of this edition is thoroughly revised. The section on the Aryas is rewritten with special emphasis on the problem of their home. A note on Shankaracharya is added. A summary is added to each chapter and an index of important topics and names has been appended.

I express, with great pleasure, my indebtedness to all those who helped me in several ways and encouraged me to revise this new edition. Especially, I am indebted to Dr. P. B. Desai, Dr. S. H. Ritti, Prof. K. T. Pandurangi, Prof. N. D. Rajadhyaksha, Prof. C. L. Mariwalla, Prof. Ram Sardeshpande, Prof. B. M. Lalwani, Prof. P. S. Joshi, Prof. Jagjit Singh, Prof. R. P. Bhamaria, Dr. Y. N. Deodhar and Dr. P. K. Naik who have helped me with valuable suggestions.

SUSHILA NIVAS, SARASVATI BAUG
JOGESHWARI (EAST), BOMBAY-60.
June 17, 1966

CHIDAMBARA KULKARNI

SOME OPINIONS

THIS text book for the undergraduate is comprehensive, critical and readable. The maps and the illustrations add to the attractiveness and usefulness of the volume. The annals of politics and culture are well balanced. Peninsular India and Greater India receive adequate attention. The last Chapter deals with the Hindu achievements in the exact sciences and philosophy."

THE HINDU.

"The author has condensed a good deal of interesting material which might be found useful by students........A fairly short account of cultural and artistic aspects of Indian history, and of the expansion of Indian thought outside the limits of the country, is also included in the book. The author has, on the whole succeeded in giving a fair picture of the history of ancient India from the earliest times till A.D. 1000."

DR. B. A. SALETORE,
Late Professor of History, Karnatak University,
Dharwar.

"You have collected a lot of useful material and presented it in an interesting and readable form. The last two chapters are useful contributions to the subject.

I reiterate that your book is a useful guide book for the postgraduate students of the University."

R. S. PANCHAMUKHI,
Retired Director,
Kannada Research Institute.

"Shri C. M. Kulkarni's book is an excellent and complete account of not only the political but the cultural history of India.

It satisfies the requirements of an admirable text book. It is simple in style and well-documented in its details and is complete in its contents. It is a lucid introduction to the study of India's most fruitful period, creative thought and culture."

Dr. P. NAGARAJA RAO, M.A., D. Litt.

"For a study of Ancient Indian History, even for a casual reader, the book has no other substitute......I have no hesitation to recommend this good book to students and also to my colleagues who have to teach the subject in colleges."

ARUN M. DONDE,
Bombay College.

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5. BHARGAV, M. L.: *Geography of Rigvedic India*
6. GHOSH, N. N.: *The Early History of India*
7. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: *Glimpses of World History*
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16. NILAKANTHA SASTRI, K. A.: *A History of South India*
17. RADHAKRISHNAN, S.: *Hindu View of Life*
18. RAWLINSON, H. G.: *India, a Short Cultural History*
19. SENA GUPTA, P.: *Every Day Life in Ancient India*
20. GHOSHAL, U. N.: *Studies in Indian History and Culture*



GHARAPURI [ELEPHANTA] : TRIMURTI

A MASTERPIECE OF

CHALUKYA ROCK-SCULPTURE

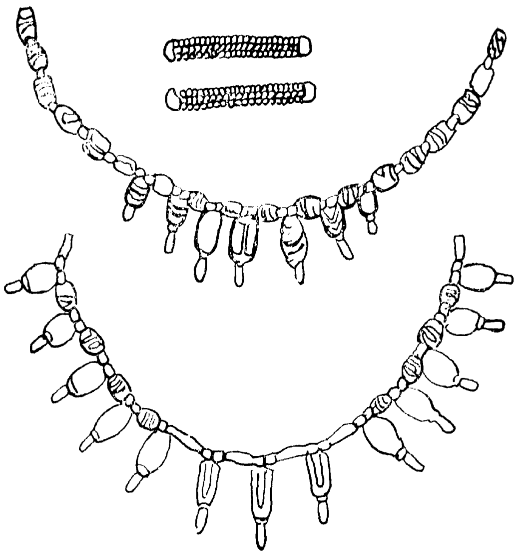
A MAGNIFICIENT REPRESENTATION

OF THE THREE FACETS

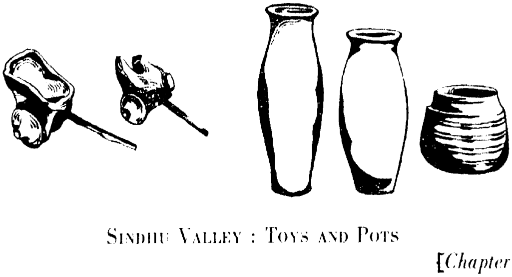
BHAIRAVA, SHIVA AND SHAKTI

OF MAHESHVARA

ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

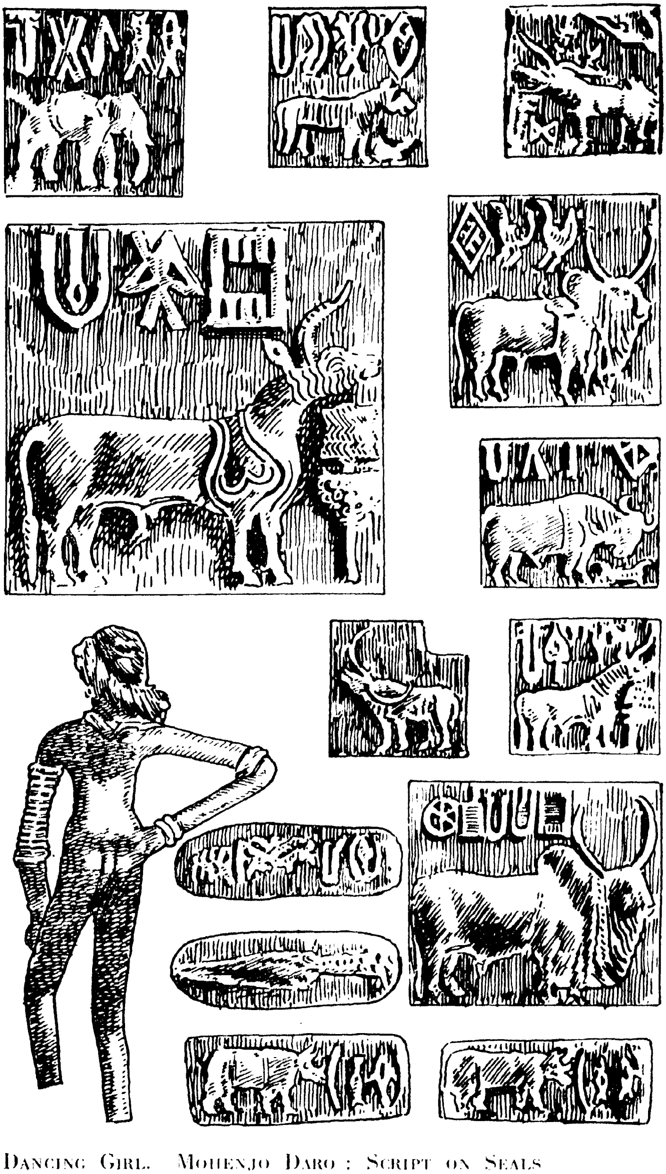


Sindhu Valley : Jewellery



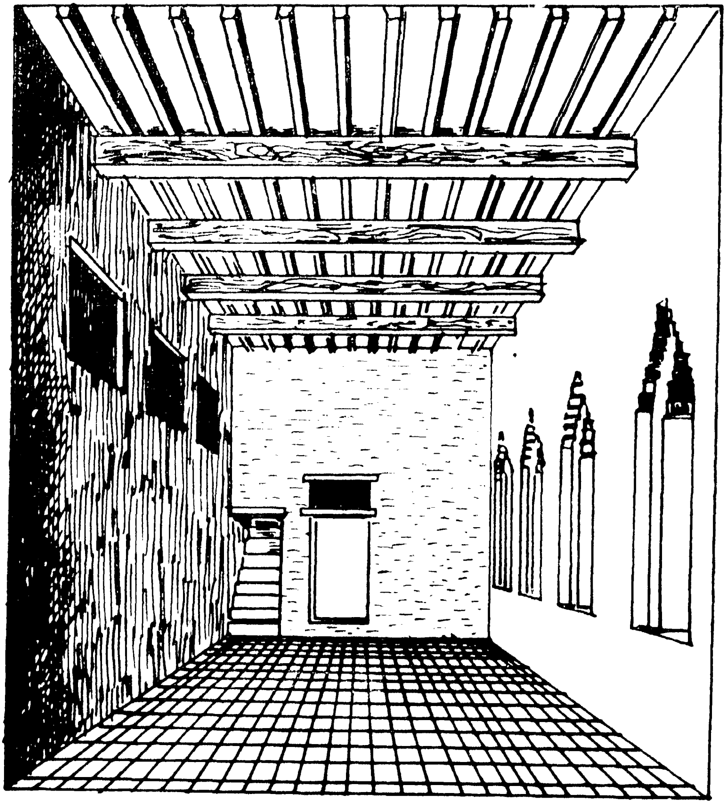
Sindhu Valley : Toys and Pots

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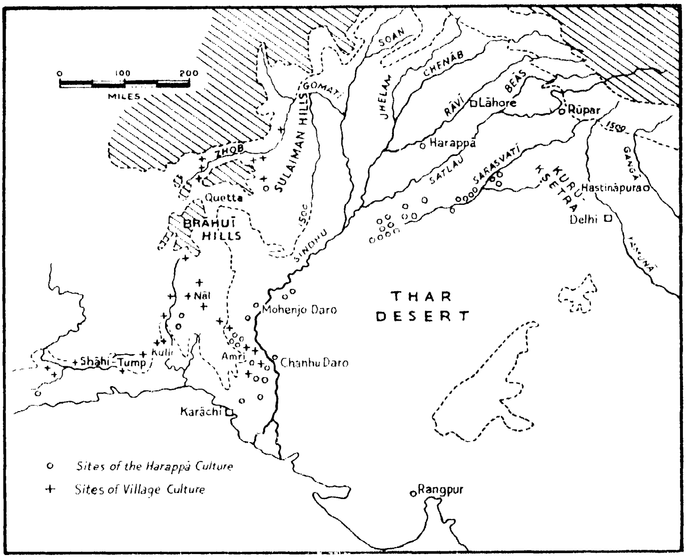
DANCING GIRL. MOHENJO DARO : SCRIPT ON SEALS

[*Chapter* 2]



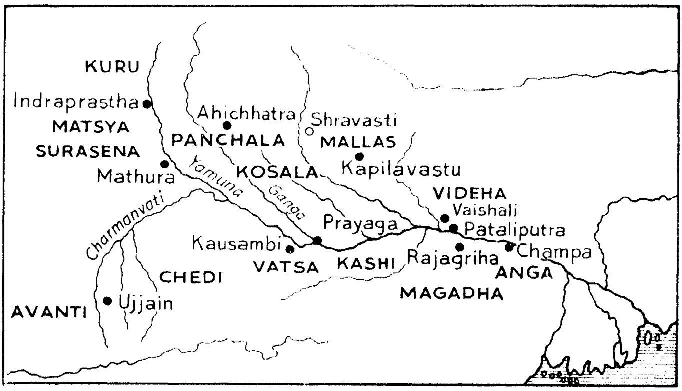
Mohenjo Daro : Great Hall

[*Chapter* 2]



Ancient Sites : Excavation and Exploration

[*Chapter* 2]

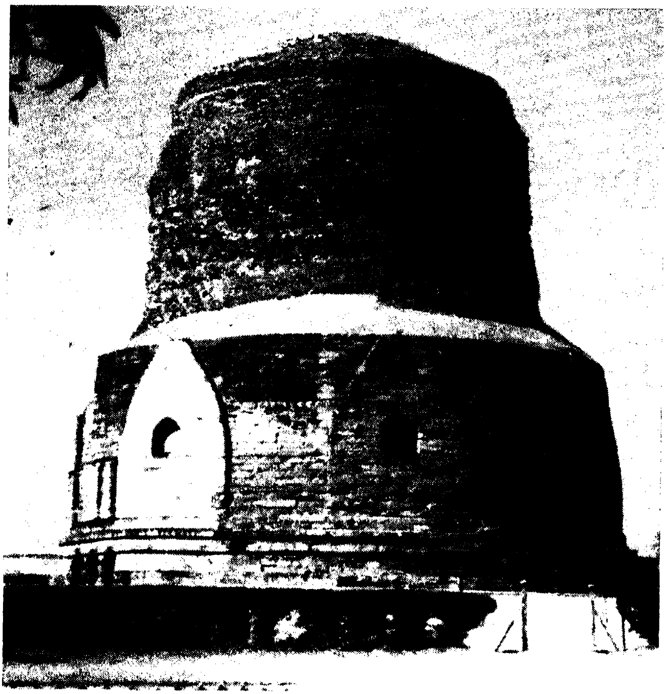


Aryavarta

[*Chapter* 3]

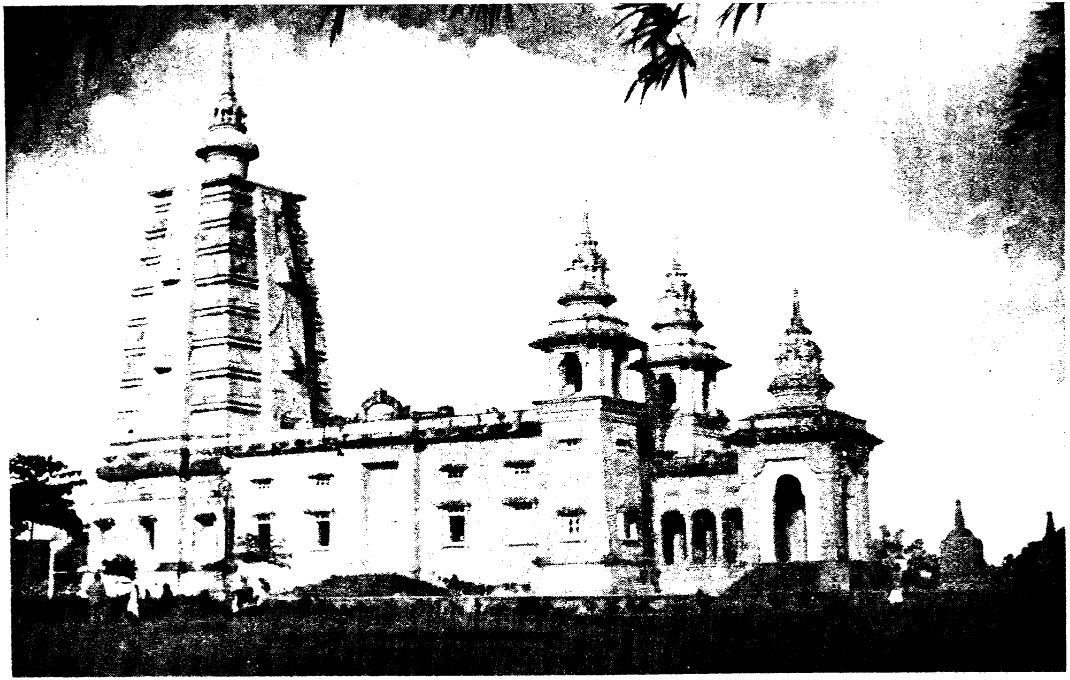


Buddha in Meditation



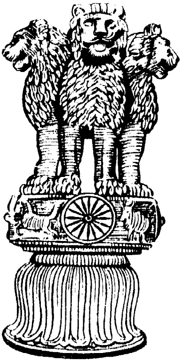
Sarnath : Dhamekh Stupa

[*Chapter* 4]



VARANASHI : MULAGANDHAKUTI VIHARA

[*Chapter* I]



SYMBOL OF DHARMARAJY

[*Chapter* 5]

BARHUT STUPA : MAYA'S DREAM

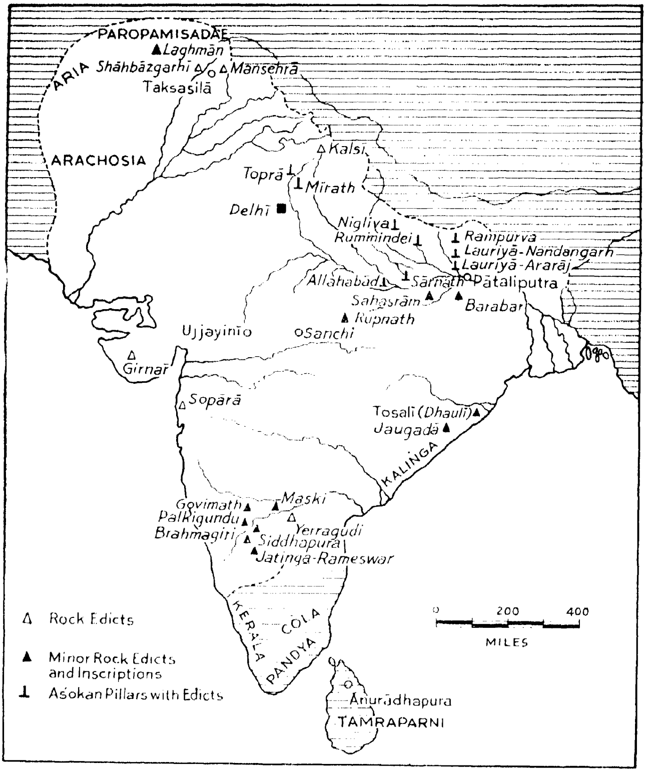




DELHI : FAMOUS IRON PILLAR
The Oldest in the World

"LANDMARK IN THE HISTORY OF METALLURGY"

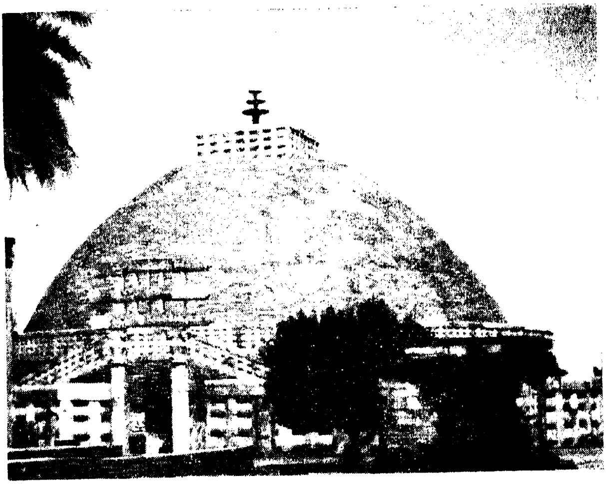
[*Chapter* 5]



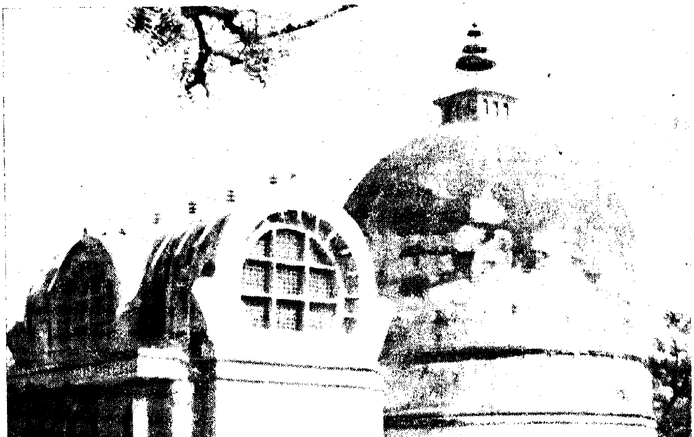
ASHOKA'S EDICTS
[*Chapter* 5]



KING MENANDER
[*Chapter* 6]

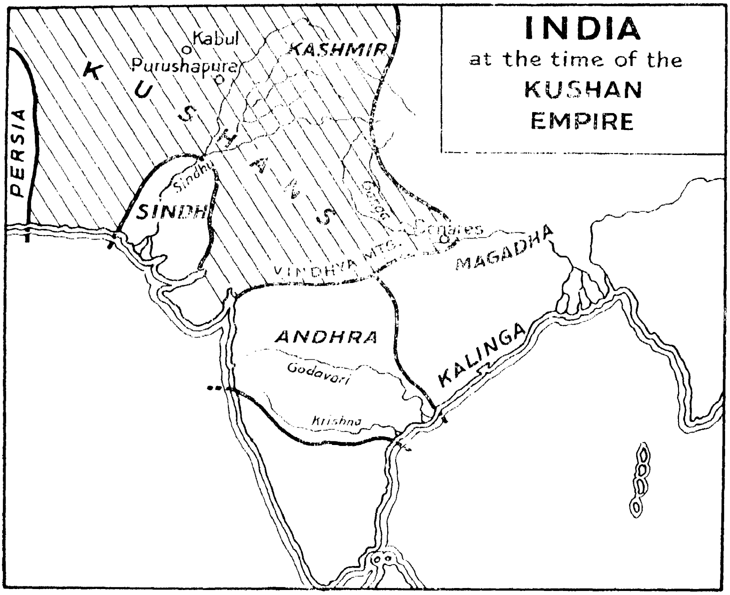


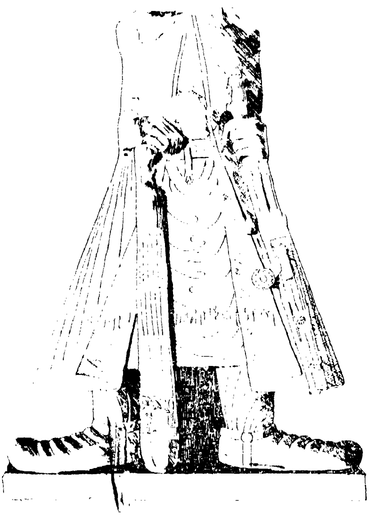
SANCHI : MAHA-STUPA



KUSHINAGARA : MAHAPARINIRVANA STUPA

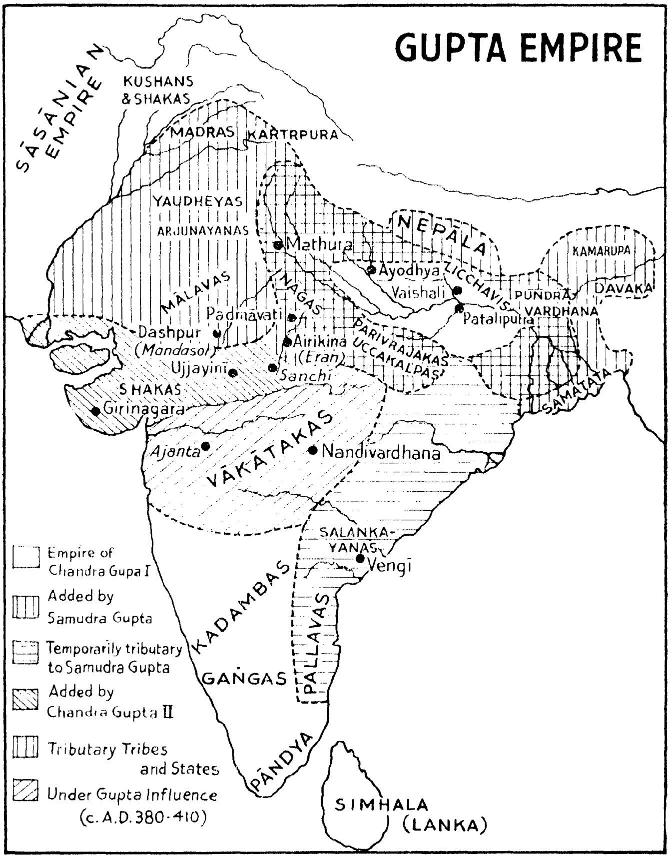
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STATUE OF KANISHKA
[Broken]

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ERA OF HARMONY

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DIDARGANJ : YAKSHI
"STONE BROUGHT TO LIFE."

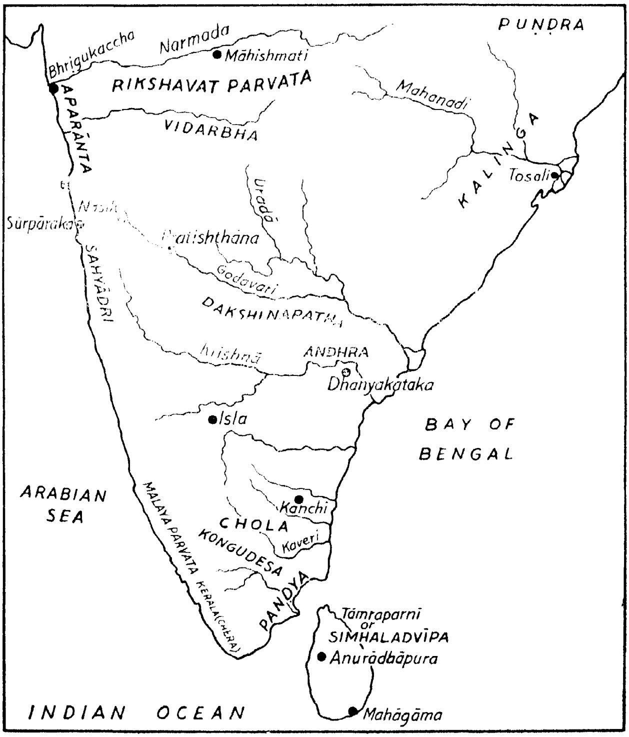
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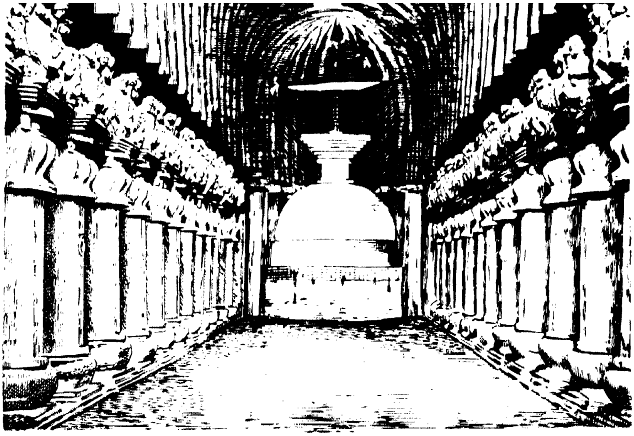


STYLE

[Chapter 10]

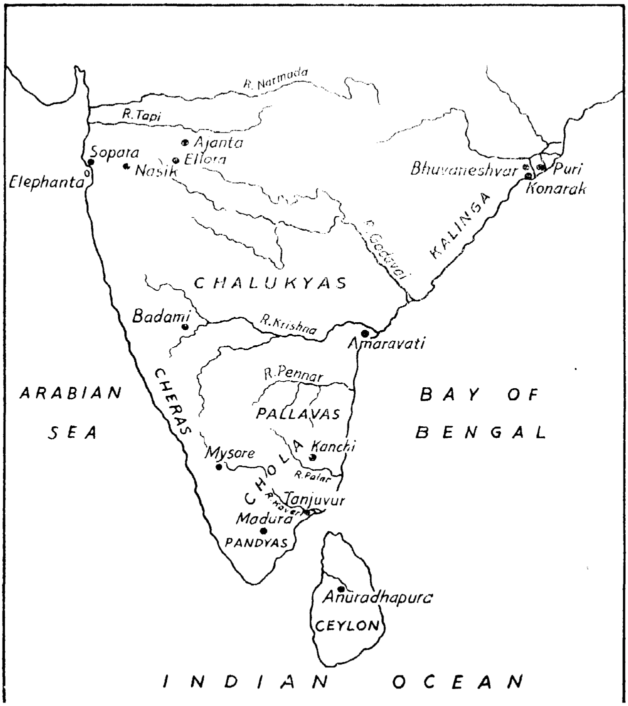
DAKSHINAPATHA





KARLI : CHAITYA 'THE OLDEST & THE BIGGEST'

KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH [*Chapter* 10]





NATARAJA
'SOURCE OF ALL
ART AND BEAUTY'

[*Chapter* 11]

TANJORE:
BRIHADISHVARA
TEMPLE

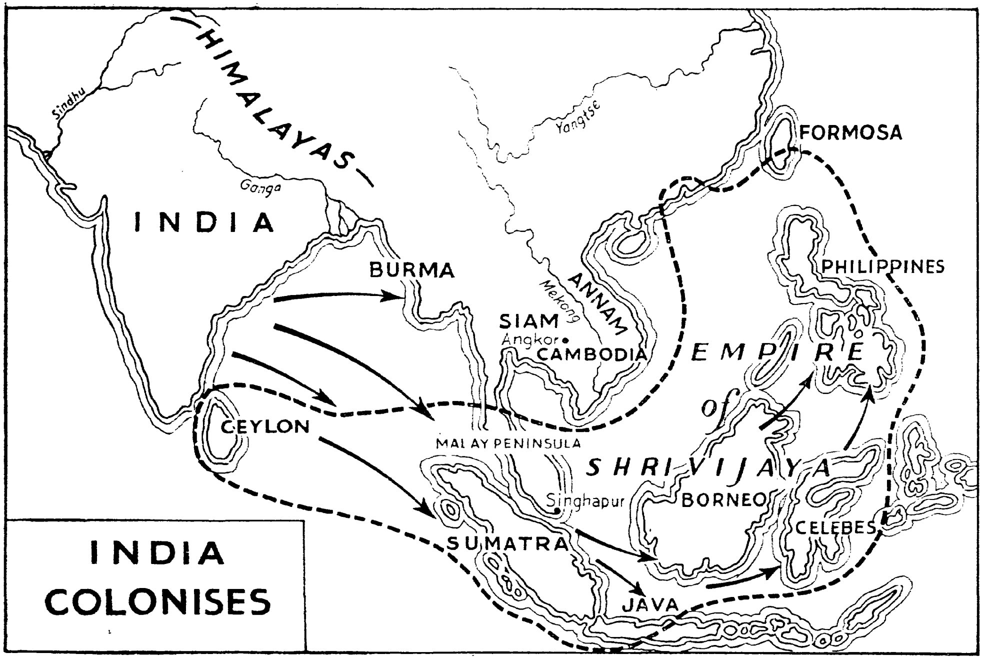




MAHABALIPURAM

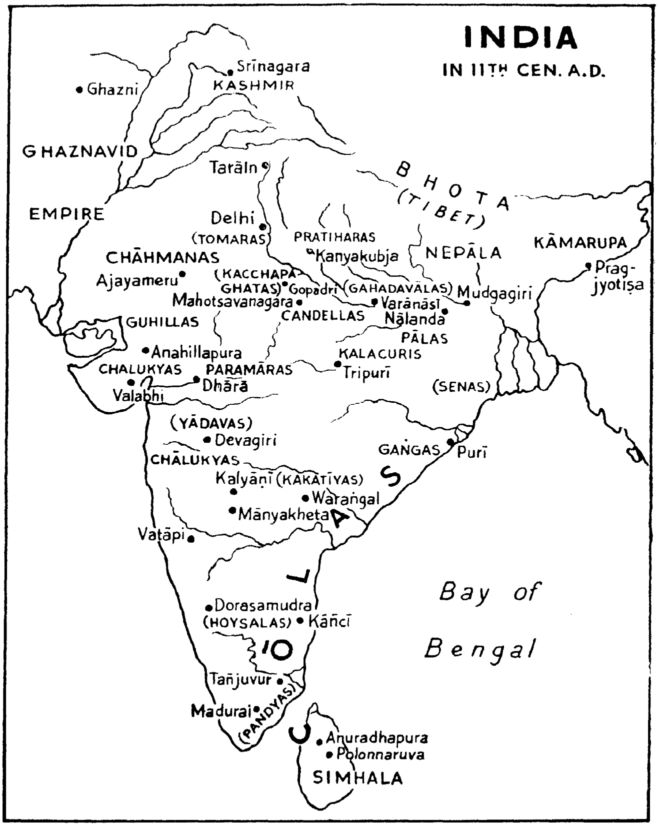
THE SEA HAS SPARED ONLY THIS TEMPLE
OUT OF SEVEN BUILT IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY

[*Chapter* 11]



CULTURAL EMPIRE

[*Chapter* 11]



END OF THE ANCIENT ERA

[*Chapter* 11]

1

INTRODUCTION

PHYSICAL FEATURES—PEOPLE—
SOURCES OF HISTORY

PHYSICAL FEATURES: SINCE ancient times, the vast area from the Himalayas to the Kanyakumari, has been known as *Bharata-Varsha*. We find references in the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the Epics and the writings of foreigners about the boundaries of the Indian sub-continent. In the north there is the highest mountain range and in the south, the west and the east there is the ocean. Thus India has a well-defined territory giving its people a sense of unity.

India is again divided into several regions by rivers, mountains and climate. The Vindhya Mountains divide the sub-continent into two parts, the north and the south. The Northern India known to the ancestors as the *Uttarapatha* has a mountain range in the north which is followed by a plain watered by two great river systems. One is the basin of river Sindhu (Indus), with its several tributaries. Panjab or the land of five rivers is known to all. This fertile plain was a centre of a great civilization over two thousand years before Christ. The other plain is that of the river Ganga which has been a centre of civilization from the *Vedic* period. This land between the Ganga and the Jamuna,

known as *Aryavarta*, was once the most productive land in the world, supporting a very large population. As the river Ganga turns east and flows to the sea in Bengal, it has a large delta and is joined by the Brahmaputra — another great river originating in the Himalayas and flowing through Assam — the easternmost out-post of Hindu Culture.

This river-system which has helped agriculture, trade and civilization is a gift of the Himalayas. These mountains serve as a strong defence. They, however, never cut off India from the rest of the world. Adventurers, scholars, tradesmen and missionaries came from the lands beyond the Himalayas through the Khyber Pass and other smaller passes of the Hindukush on the North-West.

The South is protected by the ocean on three sides. The area from the Vindhya down to the ocean is again divided into a few natural regions. The Vindhya mountains together with the two rivers Tapi and Narmada and the thick forest formed a formidable region which prevented the Aryan entry into the south for a long time. The plateau stretching from the Vindhya to the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra has been known as the Deccan. Most of it is a dry and hilly territory flanked on both sides by long ranges of mountains known as the Western and Eastern Ghats. The long strip of land between these Ghats and the ocean forms the coastal line. The land from the Krishna to the ocean in the extreme south is known as the South, "the culture of which was once independent, and is not yet completely unified with that of the North." There is not, however, much that separates the two. Ceylon is, geographically and culturally, an extension of India.

The climate varies considerably from the North to the South — a distance of about 3,200 k.m. (2,000 miles). The Himalayan region has cold winters with occasional frost and snow. The Northern plain has an extreme type of climate with cool winters and hot summers. The Deccan has more moderate climate while the South is always hot; but its temperature never rises to that of the North in summer.

A unique feature of India is its monsoon — the system of rains. Rains pour down in definite period ranging from June to October in different parts. As the monsoons are proverbially uncertain

major disasters such as flood, famine and plague have been hard to check. However, compared with other ancient civilizations, India has been blessed by a kind and generous nature. Both the severity of the anger and the merciful generosity of Nature are accepted alike by Indians without a complaint.

The physical features of a country affect the character and temperament of the people. It is pointed out that the bounteous nature and the unreliable monsoons have brought fatalism and quietism to the Indian character. Relying more on gods and luck, the Indians, it is alleged, lost the zeal for action. They became used to all sorts of calamities and did not think of making any efforts to improve their miserable conditions. But this judgment is not borne out by facts.

> "Though an element of quietism certainly existed in the ancient Indian attitude to life, as it does in India today, it was never approved by moralists. The great achievements of India and Ceylon — their immense irrigation works and splendid temples, and the long campaigns of their armies — do not suggest a devitalized people. If the climate had any effect on the Indian character, it was, to develop a love of ease and comfort, an addiction to the simple pleasures and luxuries so freely given by nature — a tendency to which impulse to self-denial and asceticism on the one hand, and occasional strenuous effort on the other, were natural reactions."

There is no truth, therefore, in the criticism that the people of ancient India were just "life-negating" ascetics. This sort of opinion was perhaps formed by the study of religious texts of a particular type. But an exhaustive review of literature, art, architecture and sciences, gives an altogether different picture. The average Indian did not try to run away from life; on the contrary, he tried to make the best out of it. There is enough evidence to show that everyday life in ancient India was quite cheerful, full of zeal and vigorous activity. Dr. A. L. Basham says,

> "India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationship than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration for her ancient culture."

Owing to the generous gifts of nature and the hard work of the people combined with intelligence, India grew prosperous and her wealth attracted foreigners from many lands. Thus the invasions of foreigners, and the rivalries of local kingdoms, resulted in a series of wars. Therefore it is pointed out that India was torn by internal wars which were destructive; slavery and inequality of social status were the results. This conclusion also is not supported by the facts of history. The war, in ancient India, did not disturb the life of the common man. The soldiers did not, as a rule, attack villages or destroy the crop or property. In the whole history of wars that were fought in India, we find very few atrocities. The battles were fought according to the rules laid down by the thinkers. As Basham puts it:

> "Our overall impression is that in no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and of man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number, and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well-protected as in the *Arthashastra*. No other ancient law-giver proclaimed such ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu . . . To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization, is its humanity."

Another effect of the physical features is the rise of small kingdoms and the wars fought by their rulers. This, some scholars have pointed out, did not help to foster the sense of unity or nationalism in ancient India. But India has been regarded as one single unit since ancient times. In the *Vishnu Purana*, we get the definition of the Indian territory, as:

उत्तरं यत् समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिणम् ।
वर्षं तद् भारतम् नाम भारती यत्र संततिः ॥

"Uttaram yat samudrasya Himadreschaiva dakshinam,
Varsham tad Bharatam nama Bharati yatra santatih."

> "The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the Himalayas is called Bharata: there dwell the descendants of Bharata."
>
> — *Vishnu Purana, II*, 3. 1.

Political thinkers, statesmen, sages and poets since ancient times, have preached this sense of unity. India has been a cultural

unit on account of the all-embracing religion, Hinduism. The Sanskrit language has been a great unifying force. Vincent Smith describes this fundamental unity of India thus:

> "The essential fundamental Indian unity rests upon the fact that the diverse people of India have developed a peculiar type of culture and civilization, utterly different from any other type in the world: that civilization may be summed up in the term of Hinduism. India is primarily a Hindu country, the land of the *Brahmanas* who have succeeded by means of peaceful penetration and not by the sword, in carrying their ideas into every corner of India. Caste, the characteristic *Brahmana* institution, utterly unknown in Burma, Tibet and other borderlands, dominates the whole of Hindu India. Nearly all Hindus revere *Brahmanas*: venerate the cow and recognize the authority of the *Vedas*. Sanskrit is everywhere recognised as a sacred language. The great gods — *Vishnu* and *Siva*, are more or less worshipped in all parts of India. The pious pilgrim when going round of the holy places, is equally at home among the snows of Badrinath or on the burning sands of Rama's Bridge. The seven sacred cities include places in the far south as well as in Hindustan. All alike share in the affection of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*."

Thus the fundamental unity was achieved by religious, cultural and economic interests. All sectarian or racial differences were merged in the national sentiment. Therefore the natural divisions of India have not destroyed the fundamental unity of the country. On the contrary, they have added a richness of variety and stability to the civilization. Unity amidst diversity has been a unique feature of Indian culture.

PEOPLE:

India was inhabited, long ago, by the aborigines of the Stone and the Iron Ages. They were the earliest people of India known to history. In the old Stone Age, men lived by hunting, or by picking fruits and roots. They used stone-weapons which were rough and crude. In the next stage which is known as the New Stone Age, these people began to use well-cut and highly polished stone weapons. The Indian people of this period cultivated the land, used metal tools and gold ornaments. There is evidence

to show that they buried their dead, and constructed tombs. Several such tombs containing iron articles have been found in the South. The use of gold by the Neolithic man is proved by the gold mine shafts which are near Maski, in Mysore State.

In the next age iron and copper were used. In north India, copper was first used and iron later. But in the South, the stone tools were replaced directly by iron ones, without any intermediate stage. Perhaps during this period of the stone and iron ages, the Aryas tried to invade the South. However the original inhabitants were overpowered by the Aryas, after a good deal of fighting and resistance. The original people are now represented by the *Kols*, *Bhils*, *Santahls*, *Mundas* and other tribes. They are usually dark people, with short noses. Their languages, their forms of worship, and their manner of living, in general, differ from those of the Aryas.

People in the South speaking Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam seem to have been the descendants of the Dravidas. According to some scholars, Dravidas were the aborigines of India, while as some scholars say, they migrated into India from the mountainous region of Baluchistan. The Dravidas developed a high civilization, which spread far and wide both in the North and in the South of India. Some other scholars believe that the Aryas and the Dravidas belong to the same race and culture.

The Mongolians from China came to India and settled here. They occupied mainly the valley of the Brahmaputra and spread all over Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Assam and parts of Bengal.

Then there are the Aryas. The original home of the Aryas is still controversial. But it is certain that the Aryas moved over a very wide area both in the East and in the West. They were tall and fair skinned. They were superior in physical strength and had developed advanced military techniques. They had also tamed horses and improved chariots, to a great extent. Therefore they spread over a very wide territory.

All the various groups lived together for a number of centuries, and therefore there has been a racial mixture. It is futile for any people either in the North or in the South to pretend to have any purity of blood.

SOURCES OF HISTORY :

The sources for early history of India may be classified as:

1. Literature Sacred and Secular.
2. Accounts of the foreigners.
3. Archaeology — (a) Monuments, (b) Inscriptions and (c) Coins.

1. LITERATURE — *Sacred and Secular*

The earliest literature is the *Vedic*, with all its branches. There are four *Vedas*, — *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. Of these the *Rigveda* is the earliest, and contains description of the life of the people during that period. We get some information from the other three *Vedas*, especially the fourth one which is said to be a sort of an encyclopaedia. It contains information on various topics. These are the primary sources for the history of the early period which is known as the *Vedic* period. Next to these there are commentaries on the *Vedic* hymns. These are again of three types — (i) *Brahmanas*, (ii) *Aranyakas* and (iii) *Upanishads*.

While the *Brahmanas* deal with religious rituals and practices, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* primarily discuss philosophy. The study of these commentaries helps us to understand the development of the Aryan culture.

The *Vedangas* are the complementary sciences of the *Vedas*. They are six in number, viz. phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy. They help us to understand the *Vedas* properly. Then there are the *Upa-vedas* or subsidiary *Vedas*, which deal with sciences like medicine, architecture, archery, etc. These reveal the high standard of scientific knowledge attained by the early Hindus.

Sutras are the manuals which contain short pithy sentences. These *Sutras* are again of three types: *Shrauta*, *Grihya* and *Dharma*. The first one refers to the sacrifices, the second to the domestic rites, and the third to *Dharma* or law. Of these, *Dharmasutras* are of great importance. They deal with law, justice, marriage, property, customs, manners, morals and other aspects of the individual and social life.

The whole of this vast *Vedic* literature belongs to a period rom *c*. 3500 to *c*. 600 B.C.

The great Epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, are a rich source of valuable material for history. The social and political conditions of the Aryas are clearly described in these popular works. They throw light on all aspects of the Aryan society.

The *Puranas* are stories of ancient dynasties. For a long time it was believed that they were mere imaginary tales and had no historical value. But recent studies reveal that: "the *Puranas* are more akin to real histories, than any other branch of sacred literature of ancient India." There are eighteen *Puranas*, and eighteen *Upa-puranas*. They deal with ancient dynasties, such as the Purus, Kurus, Nandas, Mauryas, Shungas, Kanvas, Andhras, Guptas, etc. The *Puranas* of the Jainas and the Buddhists are also a great help for the study of ancient history.

The Buddhist sacred literature is known as *Tripitaka*. The teachings of Gautama Buddha are arranged in three groups. The first is *Vinaya pitaka* which contains rules of discipline for the persons living in the *Sangha*. The second is *Sutta pitaka* which contains religious doctrine and the third, the philosophical principles (*Abhidhamma pitaka*). Thus the *Tripitaka* gives us a good deal of information about the political, social and religious conditions of the period. (c 600 B.C.). The Jaina religious works are the twelve *Angas*. They form a valuable source of information supplementing that of the *Tripitaka*. The *Jataka* tales of the Buddhists, like the *Puranas* help us to know the conditions of the early Buddhist India. The German Orientalist, Winternitz, says: "The *Jatakas* are of inestimable value, not only as regards literature and arts, but also from the point of view of the history of civilisation of the period of the third century B.C." *Milinda Panho* or the Questions of Milinda is another Buddhist record of the second century before Christ. It contains the questions asked by the Bactrian King Menander and answers given by Nagasena, the great Buddhist Scholar. The commentaries written by Buddhaghosha also contain several historical and geographical references. Considerable light is thrown on Buddhist India by such Buddhist works as *Divyavadana*, *Lalita Vistara*, *Mahavastu* and the Ceylonese chronicles — *Dvipavamsha* and *Mahavamsha*. Indian

traditions, customs, economic conditions, political organization and religious aspirations of the period can be understood by a careful study of these works.

There are some grave difficulties in trying to interpret and utilise these works, especially the *Vedic* literature. Peculiarities of grammar, different uses of words, words that have been dropped out of the language long back and such features render *Vedic* language difficult. Traditional study and methods of interpretation were given up long back. The ancient literature passed from generation to generation by oral tradition. There is every possibility that these books were affected by modification, elimination or interpolation. With great difficulty and honest effort, Western scholars have succeeded in translating them into German, French and English languages. In spite of their best intentions, the scholars could not properly understand several aspects of the unique civilization and this has resulted into incorrect translations leading to wrong interpretations and faulty representations of the ancient culture. An effort is now being made by scholars to remedy some of the grave defects.

In addition to these religious and philosophical works there are numerous works of a secular nature. They are in various branches of literature such as poetry, drama, grammar, political science, chronicles, etc. In most of these, we find important allusions to historical personalities, events and ideals. *Arthashastra* of Kautalya gives an idea of the high standard of political thought and organisation, as well as of a rich and prosperous economic life attained as early as the fourth century B.C. *Shukra Nitisara*, *Kamandakiya Nitisara* and *Panchatantra* belong to this type of literature. *Manusmriti*, followed by those of Narada, Yajnavalkya, Vishnu and others, gives a codified system of public and personal law. Panini in his famous work on grammar gives valuable information about the political and cultural conditions of the pre-Maurya and Maurya periods. Equally important is the work of other grammarians, Patanjali and Katyayana. The reference to the early Shungas is found in the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali and *Malavikagnimitram* of Kalidasa, while the *Raghuvansha* deals with the dynasty of the kings of Ayodhya. In several dramas we get an idea of the ancient notions of an ideal king,

his duties and responsibilities. *Mudrarakshasam* of Viṣhakhadatta is a story of the overthrow of the Nandas by the great statesman Chanakya and his disciple Chandragupta. Harsha-Vardhana's three dramas, *Naganandam, Ratnavali* and *Priyadarshika* reveal the cultural achievements of the seventh century A.D. In his *Harsha-charitam*, Bana attempts to give an account of Harshavardhana's exploits and beneficial rule, though there are some exaggerated descriptions. Another poetical work of historical importance is the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. He narrates the history of Kashmir from the earliest times to nearly 12th century A.D. It also contains valuable references to the events of the other parts of India.

2. Accounts of the Foreigners

Since ancient times, there has been close contact between India and her neighbours, Greeks and Iranians in the west and Chinese in the east. Travellers from these countries have left records of their impressions about India. Some of them were based on hearsay, while some of them were written after personal observation in India itself. Very few of such records have remained intact. Only a few fragments and portions quoted by later writers are available. Yet, they are valuable as they supplement the evidence of our own literature and other sources.

Skylax, Hekataeus, Herodotus and Ktesias belong to the group who wrote from hearsay; Skylax (sixth century B.C.) is reported to have reached the river Sindhu and explored it. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher-scientist quotes from his work. Skylax wanted to astonish his countrymen by the accounts of his adventures. He, therefore, writes fantastic things such as the people of the Sindhu regions had enormous feet that could be used as sun-shades, ears as big as to wrap up the whole body. Hekataeus, who wrote a geography taking his material from Skylax, is equally unreliable, except in some cases of place-names. Herodotus, a great historian of Greece who believed in recording everything he read or heard, without caring to test it, has also left his impressions about India, which were formed mainly on hearsay. Moreover, all these accounts refer to only a part of North-Western Frontier hilly tract. They perhaps had no intimate knowledge of the vast sub-continent. The hill tribes of Kabul valley are

described as Indians. Herodotus has recorded about the trees which gave wool, from which clothing was prepared. Obviously, he refers to cotton. Ktesias was a physician of the fifth century B.C. who wrote his *Indika*, a book full of fables. He is described as a deliberate "liar."

Alexander was a lover of knowledge and he had collected a few scholars around him who accompanied the great conqueror to India. Ptolemy, Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulus were some of the scholarly campaigners. They collected much valuable material, both scientific and philosophical, from India. A description of the territory from the Persian Gulf to the Sindhu is given in the book of Nearchus. This work is regarded as trustworthy.

The intimate relations between the rulers of India and Greece and Persia, were maintained by exchange of ambassadors. We have no record of Indians who went to the foreign courts, but we hear of several scholars, religious preachers and traders who visited those countries and some of them even settled there. The ambassadors like Deimachus of Syria, Dionysuis of Egypt and Megasthenes who came to Indian courts have left valuable records. The works of all these have been lost except a few extracts from the *Indica* of Megasthenes. Megasthenes lived at the court of Chandragupta Maurya and his account, though available in fragments is valuable. Another Greek of the later period, Petrocles also wrote a reliable account of India.

The teachings of Buddha were spread to foreign lands by the efforts of Ashoka. The Chinese accepted Buddhism in large numbers and several Chinese devotees visited India on a pilgrimage. Some of them were great scholars who lived here and wandered over a wide territory. They carried with them several manuscripts of religious, philosophical and scientific works. Of the accounts given by such scholarly pilgrims, three are important. Fahien visited India during the Gupta period and has left a valuable account of political, economic and cultural conditions of the period. His travel seems to have covered only the Northern plain. Two centuries later, Yuan-Chwang (Hiuen-Tsang), came to India, lived for fifteen years, had close relations with Harshavardhana and Nalanda University, and visited many parts of

India. His work is really important. Another Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing, visited India during the 7th century A.D. and his account is reliable.

Alberuni, a scholar, and historian, accompanied Mahmud of Gazni to India. Here he studied Sanskrit and social customs, and religious practices. His book *Tahkik-i-Hind*, is an interesting account of India of the 10th century A.D.

3. ARCHAEOLOGY

Recently archaeology has been developed scientifically and its evidence is regarded most trustworthy. In addition to the scrutiny and close examination of the monuments such as temples, statues, ruins of places, etc. excavation has been adopted as a means to uncover ancient cultures. Valuable material concerning both pre-historic and historic civilizations has been discovered by excavation. In India a number of sites have been excavated, more important of which are Harappa, Mohenjo Daro, Nalanda, Rajgir, Sanchi, Banavasi, Pattadkal, Chitaldurg, Halebid, Maski, Lothal, etc. These sites have yielded a wealth of historical material which throws light on aspects of ancient civilization. Architecture, sculpture, pottery and painting in the caves have also added considerably to the fund of historical knowledge.

Inscriptions on rocks, on pillars of stone and iron, and on copper plates, and on bricks and coins, form another branch of archaeology known as Epigraphy. These are written records of unquestionable value. They are found in large numbers all over India. They help us to link up the dynasties, fix the dates and the boundaries of the empires and to understand social, administrative and cultural conditions. Ashoka's edicts, Allahabad pillar, Rock inscriptions, cave inscriptions, inscriptions of Saranatha, Hathigumpha, Aihole, Jhansi copper plates, etc. are some of the most important. Seals of the Sindhu Valley will be included in this group when their pictographic script is deciphered.

The study of coins of the ancient period gives valuable information. Such evidence is called Numismatic evidence. Coins from the early period to the end of the Ancient period are available. They are a great help in knowing the dates, dynasties, economic conditions and flourishing foreign trade. Gupta coins

supply numerous details.

This brief review of the sources of our history is sufficient to show that the ancient Indians had enough historical sense. The epigraphic evidence shows that they had a keen desire to place on permanent record all that they considered important. Rules of conduct, grants of lands, construction of canals and tanks, royal proclamations and several other events are recorded in the inscriptions. The ancient kings took care to maintain carefully and accurately recorded chronicles. Most of them were destroyed by the cruel hand of time. There is in fact a wealth of material on which the history of the ancient period can be reconstructed. However there is one real difficulty and that is the absence of a single uniform era. The use of several eras, without proper reference to any one standard era has made any chronological order a difficult proposition. Still, a workable chronological order, at least from 6th century B.C. has been made available by the efforts of several scholars. There are also other difficulties such as the problems of authors, interpretations, historical and geographical allusions, etc. Yet it is gratifying to see that a fairly complete and reliable picture of the ancient society has been made available, thanks to the hard and tenacious pursuit by numerous foreign and Indian scholars for over a century.

SUMMARY

PHYSICAL FEATURES:

Bharata, our motherland, stretching from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and bounded by the Himalayas in the north and the ocean in the east, the west and the south, is a well-defined territory giving a sense of unity to its people.

The Vindhyas divide India into the North and the South. North India is protected by mighty Himalayas and watered by the two river-systems— the Sindhu and the Ganga. The two great rivers with their many tributaries have greatly helped agriculture, trade and civilization.

The South protected by the ocean on the three sides with the Vindhyas to the north, is also flanked by a chain of mountains, the Western and the Eastern Ghats. The Peninsular portion of India is one of the oldest parts of the Earth and is free from dangers of earthquakes and volcanoes. A large part of the South — from the Godavari to the Krishna — is a fertile plateau. Both North and South India receive rain during the monsoon, from June to October. As the rains are heavy at times and uncertain,

floods and famines have been frequent.

The vagaries of nature did not damp the Indian people. On the contrary, they have acquired the wisdom of meeting natural calamities with perfect calm and courage. They constructed huge dams, net-work of canals, tanks and wells to meet the challenge of drought and built temples and charity-houses to minimise the sufferings of the poor. In fact, the entire civilization of India — religion, philosophy, literature and art — is attributed to the inspiration and strength derived from the numerous rivers, hills and forests that are, no wonder, regarded as sacred.

The rivers, mountains and hills have created varied regions and consequently, cultural communities. All the groups have been, throughout the ages, harmonised into a single cultural system by Hinduism, a way of life, noted for its all-embracing and assimilating nature.

The geographical regions gradually developed into independent kingdoms. Naturally, there were wars between the rulers. However, a happy feature of the Hindu civilization is that these wars did not disturb the civilian life and therefore the progress in cultural fields continued uninterrupted. Only the foreigners — the Persians, the Greeks, the Hunas and the Muslims — caused a good deal of ruin and misery. Indians resisted them bravely and maintained their culture intact during all the trying periods.

PEOPLE:

Since times immemorial, India has been inhabited by the Aryas and the Dravidas. It also attracted foreigners — the Mongolians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Hunas, the Muslims, the Europeans — many of whom have made India their home. They have in their turn contributed to the cultural evolution of India. India to-day is the most cosmopolitan nation in the world.

SOURCES OF HISTORY:

I LITERATURE : *Sacred and Secular*

The four *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Vedangas* and the *Upa-vedas* are the oldest works, collectively known as Vedic literature. They are the primary sources of our history. The study of these works is greatly assisted by the *Puranas* and the two national Epics — the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Many of these works have been preserved by an oral tradition — a fact of unique significance, revealing the profound love of knowledge, tenacity, skill and devotion to duty. Tradition is a powerful factor in Indian life and culture.

Numerous works of a secular nature are: The *Arthashastra* of Kautalya, Shukra *Nitisara*, Kamandakiya *Nitisara* and *Panchatantra* are works dealing with state-craft, economic system and social organization. The *Smritis*

(law-books) of Manu, Yajnavalkya, Narada, Vishnu and other thinkers are treatises on law and social codes. Then there are works on grammar, etymology, poetics, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, physics, chemistry, botany and medicine. All these reveal high Indian achievements.

Literary works like those of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Vishakhadatta, Shudraka, Harsha, Bana and others contain some historical information and a good deal of material for cultural study. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and Bana's *Harshacharitam* are among notable historical works.

Works of the Jaina and Buddhist scholars similarly contain valuable material for the study of religion and culture.

2. Accounts of the Foreigners

Writings of early Greeks are of little historical value, while those of later writers like Megasthenes and Arrian are of considerable value.

The accounts of Chinese pilgrims — Fa-hein, Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) and I-tsing are informative. The record of Yuan Chwang describes life and civilization of many parts of the 7th century India. The scholar, Alberuni, who visited India during the tenth century has given a full account of the civilization he saw and knew.

3. Archaeology

Scientific excavation of ancient sites has brought to light old towns, monuments, pottery, images, etc. that tell the story of the past. The Sindhu Valley towns, Nalanda, Rajgir, Sanchi, Maski, Pattadkal, etc. are some of the achaeological sites that are of special value in the study of our history and culture.

Inscriptions or epigraphical records found in almost all parts of India—more numerous in the South—tell us about rulers, their wars and administration, temples, charities, merchant-guilds, village-panchayats and several other important aspects of our ancient and mediaeval life. They are considered reliable sources of history. Ashoka's edicts, Allahabad Pillar inscription, Girnar rock inscription, Aihole and Hathigumpha inscriptions are some striking inscriptions.

Coins issued by ancient rulers are also useful. They tell details about rulers, their dates, sometimes their territories, about the economic condition of the country, etc. The coins of the Shakas and the Guptas are important.

All evidence supplied by excavation, epigraphy and Numismatics must be interpreted in the light of tradition. Otherwise, there is every danger of misinterpretation and mis-representation of our history and culture.

All these sources indicate that the ancient Indians had a sense of history. They tried to record all that they considered valuable. But they did not give proper attention to chronology which they considered as insignificant in the context of life's eternity.

2

SINDHU SPLENDOUR

PRE-HISTORY—SINDHU VALLEY CIVILIZATION

PRE-HISTORY:

SOURCES of unrecorded history are dumb stones, bones (fossil), tombs, paintings in caves etc. Life during the pre-historic period is reconstructed on the slender evidence dug up by archaeologists and assessed by anthropologists. The pre-historic period is known as the Stone Age which is divided into Old Stone (Palaeolithic) and New Stone-(Neolithic) Ages.

Stone was the earliest material utilised by man. Stone-weapons form a vital link between the known and unknown periods of history.

It is, however, difficult to precisely narrate the story of civilization during this period. A brief outline of human activities in general would be applicable to the Indian of the pre-historic period.

Man, during this period, was a nomad. He seems to have been wandering in groups in search of food and water. Hunting, fishing and digging up roots were his occupations. Stones were carved into crude weapons and tool-making was probably a characteristic of this period. Man acquired skill by constant practice. Gradually, better weapons with the help of horns, nails, and wooden handles came to be used.

Man was a little better than animals. He had an intelligent and resourceful brain, but no natural aids of protection like horn,

nail or hair. He began to conquer nature. Inventions and discoveries of this period form the basis of early civilization. Fire, agriculture, weaving, boat-building and domestication of animals are some of the important inventions and each one of these was a long step towards civilization.

With the progress in agriculture, man settled in a place and social life began. The family, private property, social morality, religion and art — all these began to take shape one by one. Man began to improve his instruments of material progress. The wheels of progress began to move rapidly onwards, particularly after the discovery of metals.

As in pre-historic Europe, in India also human life seems to have started very early, that is, thousands of years before Christ. The Indian man seems to have passed through all the stages of human development and traces of these stages are found in different parts of the country. In the Panjab, stone tools of the Soan Culture are found. They belong to the primitive man. In the South, are found a better type of the stone weapons. There are traces of a factory which produced such weapons. The people of this region were more developed than those of the Panjab. The people of Old Stone Age were wanderers and lived in small communities. Gradually, they learnt arts necessary for civilized life. Weapons of the New Stone Age are found all over India, especially in the North-West and the Deccan. The culture of the New Stone Age has been continued in India for a long time by the aboriginal tribes.

Developed agriculture and settled life in small villages started in India by the end of the fourth millenium. Baluchistan, Sind, North-Western Frontier and hilly tracts beyond the Hindukush, all these formed one territorial unit, supporting many villages of agriculturists. However, pottery, customs, etc., show the differences in their cultural patterns. Of the several tribes, the people in the fertile valley of the Sindhu, developed an advanced civilization.

SINDHU VALLEY CIVILIZATION:

The excavations carried on since 1921, in Western India have

brought to light the important civilization of the Sindhu (Indus) Valley. The sites are Mohenjo Daro in Sind, and Harappa in the Panjab. Recent excavations at several other places have revealed the extent of this civilization over a very wide area. The discovery of this civilization is of great importance, it is believed to be one of the earliest civilizations. As such, scholars all over the world are interested in understanding it fully. The antiquity of Indian Civilization has been pushed back considerably and some scholars hold the view that the Sindhu Valley Civilization is *the* earliest civilization in the world. The Sindhu Valley Civilization has helped to solve some of the problems in the study of ancient Indian culture. Several customs, religious practices, beliefs and concepts and symbols which were found among the ancient people were not properly explained by the evidence found in the *Vedic* literature. Some of these seem to have been traced to the Sindhu Valley Civilization. In this way, the Sindhu Valley Civilization has created a rich field for research. The problems of its origin, date, development, affiliation to earlier and its relation to the later civilizations, and such other questions are not yet fully solved.

The Sindhu Valley Civilization seems to have developed in the background of a simple rural culture, traces of which are found all over Sind, Baluchistan, Iran and Iraq. All these places developed a sort of rural civilization round about 3000 B.C. Agriculture and domestication of animals were known. Poultry farming was practised. Hunting and fishing were also in practice. The houses were built of stone or mud-bricks. However there seem to have been distinctive variations in case of pottery and in some customs.

The Sindhu Valley Civilization which is known as the Harappa Civilization was mainly an urban culture. The remains at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro reveal the existence of fortified and planned cities. This civilization seems to have extended over a wide area, from the river Sutlej to the Gulf of Cambay, and from Makran to the Rajputana Desert.* This entire area belonged to a single uniform culture, and this uniformity must have been attained in the course of several centuries. The objects of every-

*See the last para on "Recent discoveries."

day use, architecture, town-planning, and others show a remarkable degree of similarity. Another characteristic is that this culture seems to have remained unchanged for a long time. These two aspects suggest the conservative nature of the people, as well as the existence of a proper and powerful centralised economic and political organization. It is the considered opinion of the scholars that the Harappa civilization is essentially Indian and owes little to the Middle East. Inspite of the urban nature of the civilization, the Harappa culture was a part of the village cultures some of which survived even after the ruin of these cities.

THE CITIES

The reconstruction of the civilization of the Sindhu Valley, on the basis of the ruins of the cities and the material found there, is really a fascinating occupation.

Both the cities — Harappa and Mohenjo Daro — were built according to well-thought out plans. The cities are divided into regular divisions, with wide and straight roads cutting at right angles. The streets vary from nine feet to thirty-four feet in width, with many narrow lanes, with houses on both sides. Each lane has a public well and so has every house, together with a bathroom and drainage system. This remarkable skill in town-planning is praised by all scholars.

The houses were of different sizes varying from a small house of two rooms to big palatial mansions with a number of rooms and more than two storeys. With plain and thick walls the houses were well protected. Ordinarily, the houses had court-yards, corridors and separate apartments such as living rooms, kitchen, store-rooms, etc. Every house had a well, a bathroom and drainage. The bathrooms were constructed even on the upper storeys. Doors were wide and usually made of wood. Roofs were flat.

The drainage system was a unique feature of these cities. In no other ancient places do we find anything similar to this. Below the principal streets and lanes ran a main drain, one to two feet deep. It was covered with a surface of brick or stone. Regular inspection traps are seen. The drains from the houses were connected to this. The main drain was carried to the river. Periodical cleaning and inspection were provided. This under-

ground drainage, together with the town-planning formed a unique feature of this civilization indicating an advanced stage.

There are a few other larger buildings. A great structure with thick walls is now named Collegiate building. This perhaps was the residence of a public dignitary, such as a President. There is a big hall in Mohenjo Daro with pillars measuring 7.5 square metres (80 square feet). It is divided by long corridors with low benches and a main seat. This could have been a place of public assembly. "The most remarkable and largest building at Harappa, is the Great Granary measuring 53 metres (169 feet) by 42 metres (135 feet), which comprises two similar blocks with an aisle 8 metres (23 feet) wide between them. Each block has six halls, alternating regularly with five corridors, and each hall is further partitioned into narrow divisions. Another discovery at Harappa, is the workmen's quarters, which comprise 14 small houses built in two blocks separated by a long narrow lane. Each house is open on all sides, rectangular and consists of a courtyard and two rooms."

Perhaps the most impressive construction of the Sindhu Valley is the Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro which is a swimming pool built on a large scale. It consists of a large open quadrangle in the centre, with galleries and rooms on all sides. In the centre is a swimming pool 12 metres (39 feet) long, 8 metres (23 feet) wide, and about 2.40 metres (8 feet) deep. With a flight of steps, raised platforms and running water, the Great Bath looks an ideal swimming resort. The complete structure is 33 metres (108 feet) wide and 57 metres (180 feet) long with walls 2.40 metres (8 feet) thick. The construction has been strong enough to last for five thousand years. Near the Great Bath, there is an establishment for hot air bath.

All the buildings were built of burnt brick, stone and mud. The architecture was solid, meant for comfort and luxury, showing very little artistic taste. There are no big temples. Nine different layers have been excavated at Mohenjo Daro. All levels indicate a similar pattern of construction with fine and strong bricks.

The careful town planning, adequate water supply, and efficient drainage system indicate the existence of a well organised

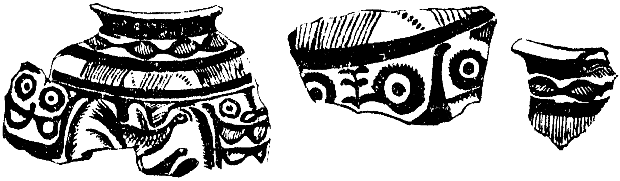
civic institution. Lamp posts for street lighting, large caravanserais, watch and ward system, and sanitary arrangements are some other civic facilities.

Numerous articles of daily use, such as pottery and other utensils made of stone, shell and metal, items of furniture such as chairs, bed-steads, stools, toys like the images of birds, animals and bullock-carts, specimens of weapons such as axes, spears, daggers, bows, arrows, slings, etc. have been found. There are many seals of clay on which are engraved the pictures of animals with a script which is still undeciphered. With the help of these articles and the seals an attempt may be made to understand the economic, social and cultural life of the people.

The existence of the large cities with big houses, wide roads, and an efficient sanitary system indicates that both the cities Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were inhabited by a considerably large population engaged in agriculture, trade, commerce and industry. The life in the city must have been active and vigorous, as is suggested by the wide roads. The roads are big enough for the free movement of large numbers of people and vehicles.

The fertile land of the Sindhu Valley, the pictures of the bull, agricultural implements and other domesticated animals, indicate that agriculture was the main occupation. Wheat, barley, rice, cotton and palm date were grown in abundance. Peas and sesamums were also cultivated in Harappa. Several animals such as the humped bull, the buffalo, sheep, elephant and the camel were domesticated. Some carvings on toys indicate that the dog was also known to them. Recent research has furnished evidence that horse was also domesticated by these people.

Arts and Crafts were numerous. The utensils were made of clay, shell and metals. Therefore there is reason to believe that the potter, the carpenter, the mason were popular craftsmen. Looking to the needs of such a large population, we can very easily see, and also there are clear proofs to show, that several other industries existed. The cotton and woollen dresses reveal the advanced stage of weaving. The services of the carpenter were essential for a large agricultural and trading community.



Sindhu Valley Pottery

In the same way, the imposing constructions reveal the high skill of the masons. The technical knowledge in the preparation of the fine pottery, burnt-brick, and in the alloy of metals must have been really of a high standard. Among the articles discovered there are a large number of ornaments such as necklaces, finger-rings, ear-rings of several varieties, for men and women. Special articles such as girdles, anklets, armlets, nose-studs for women are found. There was a great variety of shape and design of these ornaments and many of them are considered of singular beauty. These ornaments were made of gold, silver, ivory, copper and precious stones like jade, crystal, agate, carnelian, etc. They clearly prove the flourishing trade of the goldsmith, the jeweller and the ivory worker. Iron, however, is not among the metals mentioned here.

Among household articles, plain and painted earthenware, some of them glazed, were found. Vessels of copper, bronze, silver and porcelain were in use. Needles and combs, axes, chisels, knives, sickles, fish-hooks, razors, etc., were also found.

The prosperity of the people as suggested by the articles of comfort and luxury must have been due to agriculture and industry; it was also increased by commerce. There is evidence that the people of the Sindhu Valley had commercial contact with the other parts of India as also with other countries. The type of pottery, the use of tin, copper and precious stones, and the discovery of foreign seals suggest the commercial relations between Sindhu Valley and other countries. Gold, ivory and such other articles were obtained from South India.

In conclusion, the people of Sindhu Valley had achieved a high standard of material progress.

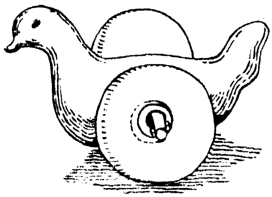
Social Life

In the absence of written records, it is not possible to know the customs, manners, or social ethics. But it is possible to believe that the people of this prosperous civilization must have had some sort of social organization. In respect of food, dress, ornaments and domestic life we have some definite information.

Wheat, barley, rice and milk formed articles of food. Vegetables, fruits and dates were included in their diet. Animal food such as beef, mutton, pork, poultry, the flesh of turtle and tortoise, river fish and dried fish from the sea, etc. were common.

The figures of men and women and the carvings on the seals do not clearly indicate the type of dress worn by these people. It seems that two garments were worn generally, in the traditional Hindu style. However, both cotton and wool were used, and some of them at least were sewn, as indicated by the existence of needles. Much is not known about female attire. Men and women seem to have been fond of ornaments. Both rich and poor freely used them of several types and designs, made of precious or semi-precious stones and metals. The styles of hair dressing as seen from the figurines discovered at Mohenjo Daro are really fascinating. Many of them look quite modern. Women used to wear a sort of head dress. Men wore long hair which was either parted in the middle or was coiled in a bun on top. Fillets made of gold and silver, were used to keep the hair in proper position. Men grew short beards. On the whole, the people of the ancient Sindhu Valley showed an inclination towards simplicity with a reasonable degree of variety. Their love of method and orderliness is attested by the symmetry of the architecture, arrangement of the houses, furniture and designs of jewellery. The shape of the seals as well as the carvings on them support this view.

Although there is no direct evidence of any system of education, the people seem to have been fairly educated. The large number of seals indicate that literacy was wide spread. Their skill of engineering, shown in the construction of houses, baths, roads and under-ground drainage system speaks of a high standard of education. So also, the use of metals and their alloys, commercial contacts, variety of house-hold articles, reveal their high



A Sindhu Valley Toy

standard of knowledge of physical sciences. Their excellent sanitary system is a proof of their knowledge of personal and public hygiene. Thus, they had a fairly advanced knowledge of Mathematics, Engineering, Physics, Chemistry, Sanitation, Astronomy as well as an equally advanced proficiency in fine arts. Until the script is finally deciphered nothing can be said definitely about their attainments.

The devision of the houses into various apartments as well as the abundance of articles of luxury and comfort, show that the people of those days had a system of disciplined family life. Various types of toys are available in large numbers. This shows that the people took keen interest in bringing up their children properly. This is surely a sign of healthy family life. Means of entertainment included dice, balls and marbles.

The engravings on the seals exhibit a high degree of art. A few stone images found at Harappa testify to the high degree of development of the sculptor's art. The two images of dancing girls tell us that the fine arts of music and dancing were popular and had reached a high standard, indicating an advanced stage of civilization. The architecture seems to be rather utilitarian. No artistic refinement is visible in its construction.

RELIGION :

Religious ideas of these people cannot be understood as there are no definite records. But some of the objects found in the ruins of the cities tell us something about their faiths and beliefs. Many figurines of the Mother-Goddess are found. Therefore it is believed that the cult of the divine Mother was widely practised. Along with this, the male god is also seen. On a seal we find a representation of a male figure with three visible faces, and two horns on sides of the tall head-dress. This figure is identified as the god Shiva, who in the later literature is described as *Maha-Yogin* and *Pashupati*, i.e. the Lord of beasts. This view is strengthened by



the discovery of stone pieces which resemble *Shivalinga*, the symbol of *Shiva*, the popular form in which he is almost universally worshipped. In addition to the worship of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, we find from the seals, that the people of Sindhu Valley also worshipped the stones, trees, animals, rivers, fish and serpents. As these practices are current in India even today, it is believed that some other features of Hinduism may be found in the religion of the ancient civilization. The relation of Sindhu Valley Civilization with the later civilization of India, seems more intimate in religious aspects than in others.

As regards the disposal of the dead, there seem to have been three methods: complete burials, fractional burials, and post-cremation burials. The complete burial means the burial of the whole body, with some articles and other offerings. Fractional burial means the burial of the bones collected after exposing the body to wild beasts or birds. Five such burials have been found. "the best specimen having been the urn containing the skull, and some fragments of bones, along with some objects of earthenware including balls, beads, shell-spoons, bits of ivory and miniature vessels." The post-cremation burial shows the ashes and the bones collected after burning, buried in urns similar to those used in first and second type of burials. All these methods were in practice during the Vedic age also.

Political Life:

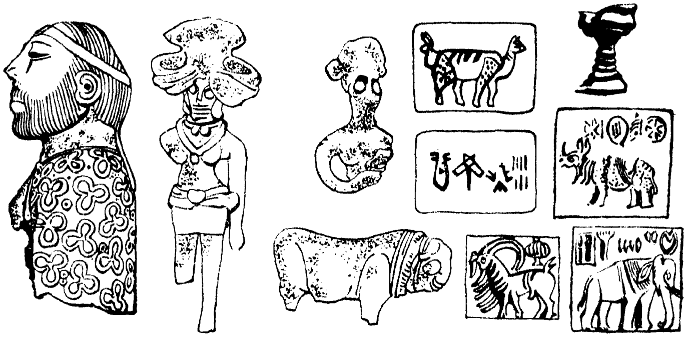
There is no clear evidence to know the nature of political organization or the history of rulers of the Sindhu Valley. However, some broad hints are available.

The planning of the city, drainage and other facilities and the discovery of the big Hall with seats suggest an efficient, well-organized civic institution. Looking to the attainments of the Sindhu people in respect of art, architecture and general material progress, it is possible to believe that they had a high degree of civic consciousness. The uniformity of culture displayed by the pattern of planning and construction, all over the area, suggests that there was a highly powerful and centralised administrative system. Earlier it was suggested that these two cities — Harappa and Mohenjo Daro — were peaceful self-governing republics. This suggestion was based on the fact that the number of war-weapons discovered was small, and no fortifications were found. With further excavations in 1946 a number of war-weapons such as swords, spears, mace, sledges and daggers have been found. The fortress around the city also was discovered. These new facts together with the rigid uniformity of culture throughout the area of Harappa suggest a single centralised state rather than a number of free republics. Another significant feature is the conservatism of the civilization. There seems to have been no change in construction, seals, script, weights and measures during the long period of its existence. for nearly 2,000 years. The civilization was little influenced by the technical advances of the neighbouring peoples. This conservatism, suggests "the unchanging traditions of the temple," rather than "the secular instability of the court." Therefore, the existence of a theocratic civilization in the Sindhu Valley, as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, is strongly suggested. But there is no definite proof.

Seals and Script:

Of the various articles found in the Sindhu Valley, seals are most interesting. More than 2,000 seals of various sizes and shapes have been found. They are of steatite, faience, ivory and clay. On them are engraved figures of men, animals, birds, legendary or imaginary creatures together with a brief inscription in the pictographic script.

The purpose of the seals is not fully understood. A number of suggestions are made regarding their use as receipts, amulets, money, family symbols, individual seals for transactions, or religious symbols. But the suggestions are not convincingly proved. What-



Sindhu Valley Figurines and Seals

ever their original purpose, they now serve an important purpose as a source of information. Most of the information that we have about agriculture, animals, birds, dress, ornaments, hair-styles, religious belief, art, script, etc., is gathered from the seals.

Seals were used in other civilizations, especially Mesopotamia, but they were different from the Sindhu Valley seals. A few seals of the Sindhu Valley have been found in the cities of Mesopotamia and one or two Mesopotamian seals were found at Harappa. This helps to prove the contact between the two civilizations.

Seals are the only source from which we get the Sindhu Valley script. It is known as pictographic script with about 270 characters. This script has little resemblance to any of the scripts of the ancient Middle East and as such, has defied all attempts at decipherment. Some believe Sanskrit to be the language of the Sindhu Valley, while others take it to be some old proto-Dravidian language. Others tried to connect this script with the Sumerian, and the proto-Elamite Scripts. With the increasing belief that the people of the Sindhu Valley belonged to the Dravidian group, the view that their language must also be of Dravidian origin seems to gain strength. Father Heras tried to establish this view-point, to prove the existence of a close contact between the civilizations of Southern India and the Sindhu Valley. But none of these views is accepted universally.

DATE:

No trace of iron has been found at any of the sites of the Sindhu Valley. This is a clear proof of its existing earlier than the Iron Age, which began in the second millenium B.C. Some outstanding features such as seals, images, pottery, etc., are very similar to those of the city-culture of Elam, Mesopotamia and Sumer, dated about 2750 B.C. There is no doubt, that the Sindhu Valley was a senior contemporary of these civilizations. The excavations at Mohenjo Daro have revealed nine layers of buildings and the lower-most is merged in sub-soil water. The various layers were probably destroyed by flood. Therefore it is reasonable to assign at least one thousand years as the life of this civilization. Thus the original strata of the Sindhu Valley Civilization goes back to about 3500 B.C., taking into account the possibility of a few more layers being under water. This is further proved by the discovery of some Sindhu Valley Seals and pottery in the sites of Mesopotamian civilization and a few Mesopotamian seals in the Sindhu Valley as well. The different sites of the Sindhu Valley reveal various stages of development. Scholars say that Amri culture was earlier than Harappa, while Jhukar and Jhankar were later. Chanhu Daro belongs to the later cultures. Therefore it is believed that the Sindhu Valley Civilization originated round about 3500 B.C. and continued up to 2200 B.C. There are scholars who fix the date of Harappa culture between the middle of the third millenium B.C. and second millenium B.C. The latest device of fixing the dates of ancient civilizations is known as C-14 method. This method when applied to this civilization has confirmed these dates.

PEOPLE:

Who were the people who built this great civilization? This is another question which is not satisfactorily answered. Some historians believe that the Aryas of the *Rigveda* were the authors of this civilization and that *Rigvedic* culture was much earlier to the Sindhu Valley Civilization. The few skeletons in the Sindhu Valley reveal that the people belonged to the Mediterranean and proto-Australiod races and the Mongolian and Alpine races were also mixed with them. People in South India who speak the

Dravidian languages are believed to be the descendants of the Mediterranean and proto-Australiod races. This suggests that the authors of the Sindhu Valley Civilization were Dravidas. Another school, however, holds that the Aryas and Dravidas belong to a single race and culture.

Some people of Baluchistan, which formed part of Sindhu Valley culture, speak Brahui, a Dravidian language. This shows that the authors of the Sindhu Valley Civilization were Dravidas. But it is also to be noted that Aryas and Dravidas belong to a single race and culture.

RUIN:

When was the Sindhu Valley Civilization destroyed? And how? By whom? We have no definite answers, so far, to these fundamental questions.

According to Marshall the Sindhu Valley cities were ruined about a thousand years before the advent of the Aryas. But recently, scholars have come to the conclusion that the Sindhu Valley Civilization must have continued upto 800 B.C. and that even after the cities were destroyed, the civilization and culture continued and was gradually mixed with the Aryan culture. It was generally believed that the Sindhu Valley cities were destroyed by the invading barbarians from the west, i.e. from the hilly territory of Central Asia or South West Asia. Recently some historians expressed the view that the cities were destroyed by the Aryas. The references in the *Rigveda* to the destruction of the cities by Indra, perhaps included the cities, Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. But all these views are found to be baseless. These cities were ruined by floods only.

There is no doubt about the continuation of the Sindhu Valley culture even after the destruction of the cities. Several religious practices such as the worship of *Shivalinga*, the trees, water, serpent, are current even to-day in India. The *Yogic* posture of the *Maha-Yogi*, *proto-Shiva* of the Sindhu Valley, closely resembles a similar posture of the Buddha of later times. The ornaments, the toys and some methods of living, food habits and several other things have continued even to this day. The script of the Sindhu Valley is also claimed to be the origin of several other scripts. In this way, we

find that the Sindhu Valley Civilization has left considerable impact on the subsequent civilization of India.

RECENT DISCOVERIES:

Since 1922, archaeologists have been trying to discover the sites of the Harappan culture in different parts of our country. So far, about a hundred sites have been found in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Kathiawar. Four important sites — Desalpur, Koth, Rangpur and Lothal of Western India — reveal all the characteristics of the Harappan culture. There are over 30 other sites in the same area, representing a changing phase of the civilization as we go into the interior.

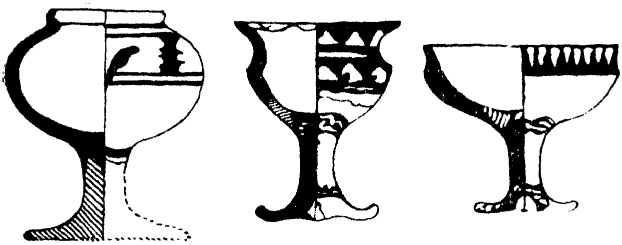
Lothal must be an old centre of civilization which flourished about 4,500 years ago. Harappans seem to have occupied it in about 2000 B.C. Excavators have unearthed five building periods and three more phases of occupation at Lothal. It was a flourishing port in the third and second millenium B.C., having maritime contacts with Sumer, Crete and Mesopotamia. A continuous cultural sequence is now traceable from 2500 to 800 B.C.

Numerous seals, earthenware, bronze vessels, stone blades and weights, terracotta sealings and a distinct ceramic ware are discovered at Lothal. These and the ruins reveal the life of its citizens.

Weapons seem to be mere household tools and not lethal ones. Does this indicate that they were a peace-loving people? They practised painting, engraving, clay-modelling and metal-casting. There are also discovered a large variety of beads of topaz, carnelian, agate, jaspar, shell, ivory, faience and copper. Wheeled animal figures, a bull with an attached string to move the head, unicorns, rhinoceros and rams have been found among the terracotta creations.

Fishing, agriculture and trade were the principal professions of Lothal people. They had also a few crafts and industries, necessary for a prosperous people. They imported carnelian, chert and steatite which were the raw-materials for their industries. A few weights of agate and chert conforming to the standards of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were also in use. Packages earmarked for exports were sealed. Terracotta models of boats and bullock-carts are also found.

In most of the houses, circular or rectangular fireplaces of brick



Lothal Articles

or clay, containing ash and hard earthen cakes are discovered. Perhaps, the people of Lothal were worshippers of fire. Some kind of animal sacrifice also appears to have been in vogue. A cemetry in the North West Lothal suggests the burial of the dead. Their racial affinities are not yet traced.

Ceramicware of Lothal is a link between the early Harappan civilization and the later copper-stone civilization discovered at Maheshwar and Navda Toli.

SUMMARY

PRE-HISTORY:

The earliest period of human civilization is known as the Stone Age as man then used stone as his weapon and tool. This age is again divided into the Old Stone Age and the New Stone age, on the basis of the crude and improved implements. Some of the basic arts of life such as kindling of fire, building of houses and boats, agriculture, construction of vehicles, etc. were discovered during the New Stone age. With the help of these discoveries man settled in a fertile river valley and since then progress of civilization has been fast. Evidence of an early, but fully developed civilization was provided by the Sindhu Valley Civilization.

SINDHU VALLEY CIVILIZATION:

The excavations carried on since 1921 have brought to light the ruins of two ancient cities of the Sindhu Valley: Mohenjo Daro in Sind and Harappa in the Panjab. More recent excavations have shown that this civilization had spread over a vast area from Harappa to Lothal in Gujarat. This essentially Indian civilization is regarded by some scholars as the earliest in the world.

CITIES:

The two cities — Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were built according to well-thought out plans. Roads, streets, houses, underground drainage system, etc., are indicative of a highly advanced stage of civilization.

The Collegiate Building, the Big Hall, the Great Granary and the Great Bath are outstanding monuments of these cities.

Numerous articles of daily use such as pottery and utensils of stone, shell, metal, etc., chairs, stools, toys, weapons and seals have been discovered. These help us to understand the life of the Sindhu Valley people.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

The fertile land of the Sindhu Valley, pictures of bulls, agricultural implements, etc. reveal that agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Among the domesticated animals were bull, cow, buffalo, sheep, elephant, camel, dog and horse.

Crafts and professions were many. Masons, brick-layers, carpenters, weavers, potters, tanners, smiths and skilled workers (ivory-workers and jewellers) flourished in these cities. All their arts and crafts indicate high skill as well as advanced knowledge of several sciences acquired by these people. Iron however, was not known to them. The Sindhu Valley people had commercial contacts with the people of Egypt, Babylonia etc. Gold, Ivory and blue stones were brought to these cities from South India.

SOCIAL LIFE:

The principal articles of food were: Wheat, barley, rice, milk, vegetables, fruits, mutton, pork, poultry, fish, etc.

Men and women wore simple dress, sometimes tailored, of cotton and wool. They were fond of ornaments like necklaces, rings, armlets, etc.

People of the Sindhu Valley led a life of discipline and order. Their houses, lanes, furniture, seals, etc. indicate their zeal in life and love of orderliness. Toys of numerous types show their love and care for children.

The seals indicate that the people of the Sindhu Valley were highly advanced in the sciences of Mathematics, Engineering, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Hygiene etc.

They were also lovers of art. Fine arts — music, dance, painting, sculpture — had reached a high standard.

RELIGION:

People of the Sindhu Valley worshipped the mother-goddess, Shiva, serpent, river, fish, tree and fire. Their religion was similar to that of the Vedic people. Their methods of the disposal of the dead too were similar.

POLITICAL LIFE:

The planning of the cities, drainage system, other facilities, etc. suggest

an efficient and well organised civic authority. The uniformity of architecture and general civilization over the vast area, suggests a highly centralised and conservative administration. Probably a sort of priestly-kingship was in existence.

SEALS AND SCRIPT:

More than 2,000 seals made of steatite, faience, ivory and clay are found. They are useful for the student. Most of the information we now possess about agriculture, animals, birds, dress, ornaments, art, religion, etc. is gathered from the seals.

On most seals we find some writing in the pictographic script which is not yet satisfactorily deciph

The fact that these people did not know iron is significant as it places this civilization during the Pre-Iron Age, which is believed to begin about 2000 B.C. Their contact with other ancient civilizations like Elam, Sumer, Mesopotamia and Egypt helps us to fix the date of this civilization much earlier, i.e. about 3500 B.C. The C-14 method has confirmed dates as nearer to the estimates.

PEOPLE:

The few skeletons indicate that people belonging to the Mediterranean, proto-Australiod, Mongolian and Alpine races were among the people of Sindhu Valley. Some scholars think that the Dravidas were the authors of Sindhu civilization while others hold that they were the Vedic Aryas. The Dravidas and the Aryas belong to the same race and culture. In any case, this civilization is essentially Indian and owes little to any foreign influences.

RUIN:

Some writers hold the view that these cities were destroyed by invading Aryas. But recent research has shown that they were destroyed by floods. The civilization certainly continued to exist even after the destruction of the cities. The pattern of houses, food habits, ornaments, toys, gods and goddesses, etc. have continued to this day.

Recent excavations at several fresh sites, notably at Rangpur and Lothal have proved a close affinity between Sindhu Valley and the Vedic civilizations.

3

VEDIC ARYAS

THE ARYAS — EARLY VEDIC SOCIETY — LATER VEDIC SOCIETY

THE ARYAS:

THE word *Arya* means 'noble', 'respected', 'high-born', 'elderly', 'cultured', etc. and it is used in all our religious and literary works, right from the *Rigveda* in this sense only. It does not indicate any racial and linguistic distinction. Modern scholars are fully aware of the meaning of the term '*Arya*'. Max Muller declared long ago that the term *Aryan* is utterly inapplicable to race. So also Basham has categorically stated that there is no Aryan race and there is no Dravidian race. Therefore, the term Arya denotes a cultural context only.

According to Indian tradition, the term *Aryas* denotes the people who believed in and lived upto a well-defined cultural system. They are often distinguished from the *dasas* and *dasyus* who, at different stages of history, deviated from the accepted cultural standards. In other words, the term *dasa* or *dasyu* or *anarya* simply means 'uncultured'; it is a term of abuse or criticism. It, again, does not mean that the *dasas* or *dasyus* belong to a different race or territory or even, language. In brief, aryas and dasas belonged to the same race, language and territory from times immemorial. There is no evidence to show that either of them came from outside India.

Some scholars, who wrongly thought that *Aryas* and *dasas* were racial terms, attempted to put forth the theories of the Aryan invasion of India and of the struggle between the *Aryas* and *dasas*. As several writers repeat these ideas it is necessary to examine them, at least briefly.

A comparative study of Sanskrit, Persian, Greek, Roman, French, German and English languages suggests that there are certain basic common similarities. This similarity is due to the fact that all these languages have sprung from a common stock which is not to be found now. It was surmised therefore that there was a common parent-language and further that the speakers of this common language must belong to a common race and probably lived in nearby groups, before they separated and spread to different parts of the world. This original territory came to be termed in all discussions as the original home of the Aryas. Till 1851 all scholars believed that India was the original home of the Aryas. Then, it was advocated that the Aryas or (as they called them) the Indo-Europeans, were originally the inhabitants of Europe. Many regions,— Persia, Bactria, South Russia, Central Europe, Central Asia, North Pole, India, Tibet, etc. were suggested and dismissed as the original home of the Aryas. There is no universally acceptable solution in sight.

The problem of the original home of the Aryas has become so confusing because it is based on the assumptions of a common language, common race and a common home. All these theories are mere guesses. There is no archaeological or any other scientific proof to support these guesses. A study of the Indian literature, religion, philosophy, society, and political and economic organizations clearly shows that the Aryas of India and the so-called Indo-Europeans of Europe and Asia belong to two entirely different civilizations. The similarity of languages is superfluous and cannot be taken to be the basis of a common race or common home. Therefore, there is no sense in the theory that the Aryas lived originally in one single home outside India. They were undoubtedly the natives of India.

We have also to note that in the huge Sanskrit literature there is no mention of any place outside India from which the Aryas

could have migrated here. On the contrary, the authors of the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the Epics declare their deep love and devotion to their mother-land — Bharata, and invest it with all holiness. They also describe, in the *Rigveda* — the earliest literary work of mankind, their home, particularly, the *Sapta*-Sindhu region, so fully and in so many details as to leave no doubt about their being the sons of this sacred soil.

On the evidence of the *Puranas*, scholars like F. E. Pargiter have shown that the Aryas went out of India and settled in different parts of this earth. They are the originators of all early civilizations. This view is further supported by the evidence of common place-names, names of rulers, gods, social systems, religious beliefs and practices of the people of Sumeria, Egypt, Persia and other ancient civilizations. There is also the evidence of the Bogoz Koy inscriptions of about 1300 B.C. that tell the story of Aryan expansion into the middle-East. All these facts are still under investigation and therefore, nothing can be definitely concluded from them. In any case, there is no doubt about the fact that *Aryas* and *dasas* lived together, from times immemorial, in India and there is no evidence to show that either of them came from outside.

There is ample evidence that human beings inhabited different parts of India since the remotest past — the Old Stone-Age and the New Stone-Age. It is natural that different communities living in different parts developed various regional cultures and they were gradually harmonised into a single system. The earliest record — the *Rigveda* contains the story of the evolution of this culture in the region known as *Sapta*-Sindhu and the excavations carried on in the Sindhu Valley and other sites have brought to light the relics of civilizations of different regions. There is close similarity as well as some difference between the Vedic and other civilizations. As such comparative study is still going on it is too early to make any categorical statements. However, there is little doubt that as early as the later Vedic period, the culture of India had attained a fair degree of uniformity at least in its major aspects such as religion, philosophy, and literature. Before discussing the date of the *Rigvedic* civilization and its chronology, let us note its geographical background.

SAPTA-SINDHU REGION:

The *Sapta*-Sindhu region of the *Rigvedic* period comprised roughly the northern parts of the Meerut division and the Kumaon division of the Uttar Pradesh, a good part of the Ambala division, the Jalandhara, the Lahore and the Rawalpindi divisions and the former princely states of the undivided Panjab, the Jammu and Kashmir, the former North West Frontier Province and the eastern parts of Afghanistan. It was bounded by the Arvavat sea and the Tibet in the east, Turkistan in the north, the Persian Afghanistan and the Paravat sea in the west, and the Sarasvat sea and the northern Pariyatras (Aravalis) in the south. The seas are clearly mentioned in the *Rigveda*. They were shifted away by violent geological disturbances references to which are found in the later Vedic literature, the *Puranas* and the epics. However, the famous seven rivers that formed the Sapta-Sindhu region are: the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Shutudri, the Marudvridha, the Arjikiya and the Sindhu. *Rigveda* mentions in all about 90 rivers of which about 60 are identified.

DATE OF THE RIGVEDA:

According to the Indian tradition all the four Vedas are *anadi* (beginningless) which can only mean that their origin is totally forgotten. However it is also believed that the Vedas were arranged by (Veda) Vyasa who lived in the closing years of the *Dvapara Yuga*. Again, according to tradition, the *Dvapara yuga* came to an end on 18th February 3102 B.C. the beginning of the *Kali yuga*. The Vedas and other allied literature must have been composed long before 3102 B.C. Further, taking into consideration the dynasties of kings mentioned in the *Puranas*, the date of the *Rigvedic* civilization goes back to about 7000 B.C. This date agrees with the view of the geologists according to whom the Ganga-Sindhu region became firm and dry and fit for human habitation about 7000 B.C.

Modern scholars however suggested different estimates discarding the traditional dates: — Lokamanya Tilak, 6000 B.C., Jacobi, 4500 B.C., Max Muller 1200 to 1000 B.C., Griffith, c. 1500 B.C. etc.

Tilak and Jacobi have adopted the astronomical method while the others have offered mere guesses. Winternitz says:

> The available evidence merely proves that the Vedic period extends from an unknown past, say X to 500 B.C., none of the dates — 1200-500 B.C., 1500-500 B.C., and 2000-500 B.C., which are usually assumed, being justified by facts. Only it may be added, as a result of recent researches, that 800 B.C. should probably be substituted for 500 B.C., and that the unknown date X more probably falls in the third, rather than in the second, millenium before Christ.

To conclude, the dates advanced by modern scholars have no valid support while the traditional date, i.e. from c. 7000 B.C. to 600 B.C. has the support of the uninterrupted tradition of thousands of years.

The Vedic period (c. 7000 to 600 B.C.) may be further divided into the Early Vedic and Later Vedic periods for convenience of discussion. The Early Vedic period, from c. 7000 B.C. to 3000 B.C., is also known as the *Rigvedic* period. The later Vedic period, from 3000 B.C. to 600 B.C. is also known as the period of the *Brahmanas* (the commentaries on the *Vedas*). The Sindhu Valley civilization is only a part of the Vedic civilization.

Some archaeologists, notably Wheeler, Piggot and Woolley, contend that the Aryas were barbarians and that they destroyed the Sindhu Valley cities and killed innocent citizens — men, women and children — ruthlessly. The contention is refuted as utterly baseless. Here, for example, is what the American archaeologist — George F. Dales, says about the '*Mythical Massacre*' at Mohenjo Daro:

> There is no destruction level covering the latest period of the city, no sign of extensive burning, no bodies of warriors clad in armour and surrounded by the weapons of war. The citadel, the only fortified part of the city, yielded no evidence of a final defence.
>
> The enemy of the Harappans was Nature aided and abetted by the Harappans themselves, who accelerated the spoliation of the landscape through improper irrigation practices, and by denuding the watersheds through over-grazing and deforestation. Indra and the barbarian hordes are exonerated.

The *Rigveda*, though the earliest record of mankind, reveals a fully developed civilization, and is regarded by Indians as a source of tradition and authority in all matters of religion, philosophy, literature, fine arts and sciences.

In brief, the Aryas and the Dravidas belong to the same race, language and culture. They are the original inhabitants of India and there is no convincing evidence to imagine that either of them came from outside India. All references to the struggle between the *Aryas* and the *Dasas* mean only political civil wars. The Sindhu Valley civilization exhibits many similarities with the Vedic civilization and is probably a part of it. The date of the Vedic civilization cannot be fixed with any degree of certainty but it is beyond doubt that the Vedic is the earliest of all ancient civilizations. The people of the Vedic India were highly cultured and the *Rigveda* is still regarded by Indians as the source of all tradition and authority.

EARLY VEDIC SOCIETY:

POLITICAL LIFE:

The political organization was tribal, at least in the beginning. A group of related families was called a *grama* which later on came to mean a village; but at that time it meant a group of relatives rather than a settled area. The union of a few *gramas* was probably a *vish* and a still higher group was known as *jana*. However, the exact nature of the groups *vish* and *jana* is not yet clear. Several families — Bharatas, Matsyas, Krivis, Tritsus, Yadus, Purus, Anus, etc. are mentioned in *Rigveda* to indicate separate units.

Rajan was the word for the ruling chief, primarily a leader of war. He was elected by the people. Valour and military leadership were important considerations in electing him. Several verses in the *Rigveda* and *Atharvaveda* describe the keen contest of the rival candidates in the elections of the kings. Gradually, kingship became hereditary. The ruler was also the *vishpati* i.e. the patriarch of the tribe. The royal treasury was filled with gifts from the people, tributes of defeated tribes and the booty of war.

The Rajan was not an absolute monarch but a sort of dignified magistrate with only executive duties. References to the deported kings indicate the full extent of sovereignty of the people. Two assemblies, *Sabha* and *Samiti*, were responsible for the government of the nation. *Sabha* was an assembly of the distinguished great men — *Maghavans*, while *Samiti* was the popular assembly of all the Aryas, belonging to the region. *Sabhasad*, the member of the *Sabha* was greatly respected. *Gramani*, the representative of the *grama* was also included in the assembly. They participated in the councils held to discuss the matters of government and the *rajan* was to act according to the decision of the people. He was assisted by *Purohita* and *Senani*. *Purohita* was the learned man who guided the king and the people in all matters of religion, social customs, morality, law, etc. *Senani* was of course the leader of their army.

Some tribes managed their own affairs without a king. We hear in some verses of the *Rigveda* that chiefs or *rajas* met together and decided matters in the tribal assembly. The word *raja* was applied to all important persons participating in the deliberations of such assemblies.

The king was in no sense divine but was duly respected. The necessary pomp and pageant were maintained. Living in a grand palace, the king conducted his court with dignity. Administration of justice was also one of his important duties. But usually the disputes were settled in the village through the arbitrator, *Madhyamasi*. Crimes of theft, robbery, murder, etc. were condemned and punished with heavy fines — *Vairadeya* and *Shatadaya*. Failure to repay debts often resulted in slavery.

SOCIAL LIFE:

It is beyond doubt that the Aryas had already a class division. We get from the oft-quoted hymn — *Purushasukta* in *Rigveda* that the four classes Brahmana, Rajanya, Vaishya and Shudra were created from the limbs of *Purusha* — primeval man. But the classes were not distinct nor were they rigid. We find a verse in *Rigveda* which tells us that a composer of hymns, a physician, a grinder of corn all lived together. The above mentioned *Sukta*

might be taken to emphasise what Dr. R. C. Mujumdar calls "Corporate Life". The spirit of corporate life pervades throughout the ancient period as reflected by the institutions of family, guild, *sabha*, *samiti*, *janapada*, *parishad*, etc. This social division was developed into a well-defined *Varna*-System. As Basham puts it, "The term '*varna*' does not mean 'caste' and has never meant 'caste' by which convenient word it is often loosely translated". (More about the *Varna* System in the later Vedic period). The Aryas were a simple people without distinction of class or status. Every householder performed the simple religious duties of sacrifice and prayer.

But they were not without their pleasures. Two drinks were common, *Soma* and *Sura*. *Soma*, a juice from a plant of the same name was drunk at sacrifices and this had religious sanction. *Sura* was a sort of strong wine prepared from Yava but its use was disapproved. Gambling was another popular pastime. A verse in the *Rigveda* graphically describes the lament of a gambler and advises him to go to his wife and children. Chariot-racing was a sport natural to horsemen, and warriors. Music and dancing were also popular. Aryas loved poetry. Several hymns addressed to Ushas reveal their high standard of poetry. Musical instruments like the flute, lute and harp were popular. Drums and cymbals were employed in war-music. They had different types of dances to suit occasions like festivals, harvest and wars. References to dancing girls are found.

Family was the basic unit of Aryan society. To meet the needs of an agricultural community, Aryas developed joint families with many members. The eldest male member was the head. He guided the family in all social, political and religious activities. The members shared a common life, and the entire property belonged to the family as a whole. Marriages were arranged by the elders but there was much freedom in the choice of the partner. Child marriage was unknown. In fact there were few restrictions on marriage. Except brother and sister, or father and daughter, and such other very close relations, all were allowed to marry. Marriage was generally monogamous, though polygamy was tolerated. Marriage was indissoluble i.e. there was no divorce. The woman enjoyed a position of respect. She was

the sole mistress in household matters. All religious functions were performed by husband and wife together. Participation in social functions by women was free. Unmarried girls got a share in the property. Education for girls also was the same as was given to the boys. Eminent women like Visvavara, Lopamudra, Ghosha, Sikata Nivavara, are respectfully referred to in the *Rig-veda* as composers of the hymns. They were of the rank of the *rishis*.

Children received education at home. Recitation of the *Vedic* hymns was a common practice. Occasional training was given by actually associating the young with agriculture, trade, arts and crafts. Their technical skill in carpentry, pottery, weaving, tannery and use of metals was of a high standard. Astronomy, medicine and mathematics, especially geometry were known to them.

Economic Life

The Aryas preferred to live in the small villages in the open fields, though the *Rigveda* mentions cities. They cleared forests, cultivated lands, and built houses of mud and bamboo. Agriculture and cattle rearing were their chief occupations. There are many references to agriculture and the pastoral pattern of life. The methods of agriculture are similar to those that prevailed in India till recently. The plough was drawn by the oxen in teams of six, eight, or even twelve. The different stages of the harvest such as reaping of the crop, bundling, thrashing, and winnowing, are all described in the *Rigveda*. They knew something about irrigation. They took delight in agriculture. They were fascinated by their natural surroundings. The following verses from the *Rigveda* bring out their joy associated with the country life:

> "Let the oxen work merrily, let the men work merrily, let the plough move on merrily. Fasten the traces merrily; ply the goad merrily.
>
> "May the plants be sweet unto us; may the skies and the firmament be full of sweetness; may the Lord of the field be gracious to us. We will follow him uninjured by enemies.

"Fasten the ploughs, spread out the yokes and sow the seed on the field which has been prepared. Let the corn grow with our hymns; let the scythes fall on the neighbouring fields where the corn is ripe."

The domestication of animals was another important occupation of the Aryas. The cow, the ox, and the horse were common animals which were domesticated. The lion, the wolf, the elephant and the camel were known to them. The dog is mentioned, but was not a favourite. *Rigveda* contains "some of the finest lines on the horse in the world's literature":

"Rushing to glory, the capture of herds,
Swooping down as a hungry falcon,
Eager to be first, he darts amid the ranks of the chariots,
Happy as a bridegroom making a garland,
Spurning the dust and champing at the bit".
"And the victorious steed and faithful,
His body obedient to his driver in battle,
Speeding on through the melee,
Stirs up the dust to fall on his brows."
"And at his deep neigh, lie the thunder of heaven,
The foemen tremble in fear,
For he fights against thousands, and none can resist him,
So terrible is his charge".

The horse was as important as the cow, chiefly for military reasons. It was employed to draw the Chariot — a light vehicle with two spoked wheels, carrying usually two warriors equipped with sword, spear, bow and arrows.

Being an agricultural community, the Aryas had developed all the crafts necessary for the profession. The carpenter, the potter, the weaver, the tanner and other craftsmen whose services were essential for agriculture are mentioned in the *Rigveda*. All the villages seem to be self-sufficient in their requirement. Metals like gold, silver, copper and bronze were known to them. The word '*ayas*' which in later Sanskrit meant iron, is found in the *Rigveda*. But some scholars are of the opinion, that the Aryas of the *Rigveda* period did not know iron, and *ayas* probably meant bronze. However, it is believed that iron was also known. The physicians are mentioned. Clothes were made of wool, skin,

and cotton. Their food however, was chiefly *Yava*, including all species of cultivated grain. They included animal food in their diet.

Though mainly an agricultural community, *Aryas* had also a system of trade. Barter, the simple method of exchange was the general practice. Cow was a measure of wealth as well as the medium of exchange. *Nishka*, a gold coin of the later time is mentioned in the *Rigveda* as a sort of currency. It was used as an ornament also. No regular class of merchants is mentioned among the *Aryas*. A class of traders referred to as *Panis* were wealthy merchants who did not believe in sacrifice. They were regarded as enemies. Indebtedness and usury are however mentioned.

Religion

The *Aryas* worshipped Nature. Gods representing the forces of nature are mentioned in the hymns of *Rigveda*. *Rita* was the term used to mean the natural law of the cosmic order and morality. It was the regulator of the whole Universe. *Dyaus* (sky), *Prithvi* (earth), *Varuna*, the sky god and protector of *Rita* and Indra, *Savitri*, *Mitra* and *Pushan* represented different powers of Sun God, such as heat, light and nourishment. Vishnu was the symbol of swift movement while Rudra and Maruts were gods of storm and winds. Shiva was the later name given to *Rudra*. *Vayu* and *Vata* were other gods of winds while *Parjanya* was the god of rain. There were gods on earth also. *Agni* was an important deity; *Soma* was regarded as essential for sacrifice. The river Sarasvati was another goddess on earth. But the most loved goddess was *Ushas* (dawn) belonging to both earth and heaven. Some of the most beautiful hymns are addressed to *Ushas* as can be seen from the following examples:

"She, the young, the white-robed daughter of the sky,
The mistress of all earthly treasures, dawns upon us,
Dissipating darkness! Auspicious *Ushas!* Shine
Upon us today on this spot.

"There heaven's daughter has appeared before us,
The maiden flushing in her brilliant garments.

Thou sovran lady of all earthly treasures,
Auspicious Dawn, flush here today upon us.
"Bringing upon it many bounteous blessings.
Brightly shining, she spreads her brilliant lustre.
Last of the countless morns that have gone by.
First of bright morns to come has Dawn arisen.
"Arise! the breath, the life, again has reached us,
Darkness has gone away and light is coming.
She leaves a pathway for the sun to travel."

Sacrifice and prayer were the two other features of the early *Vedic* religion. In a simple sacrifice, every *Aryan* couple offered milk, grain, ghee, flesh and *Soma* to their Gods through *Agni*. Prayers were addressed to Sky, Earth, Indra, Varuna, etc. for wealth, prosperity, protection, as also for the destruction of their enemies. *Asuras* and demons representing evil were considered as enemies.

Practice of worshipping river, tree, serpent and stones was also followed by the *Aryas*. Cow was respected and was called *aghnya*--not to be killed.

The *Rigveda* (10th book) contains some hymns which reveal a trend towards the belief in one God. For example,

"They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna
And Agni; he is the heavenly bird Garutmat:
To what is One, the poets give many a name,
They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan."

The mystery of the Universe and the philosophic concept of Brahman are expressed in such verses as:

"Who is our Father, our Creator, Maker,
Who every place doth know and every creature,
By whom alone to gods their names were given,
To him all other creatures go, to ask Him."
".....neither death nor deathlessness existed:
Of day and night there was yet no distinction.
Alone that one breathed calmly, self-supported,
Other than It was none, nor aught above It."

LATER VEDIC SOCIETY:

EXPANSION:

Later Vedic period is a continuation of the earlier period without any break. The division into two periods is made just to indicate two phases of Aryan progress. *Rigveda*, while it is the main source for the study of the first period also gives some hints for the study of the later Vedic period. The remaining three Vedas — *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*, with the commentaries, *Vedangas*, *Upa-vedas* and *Sutras* are the primary sources for the study of this period. Epics — *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, though composed during a still later period, throw some light on the society of this period. So also the *Puranas*. But the Epics and the *Puranas* contain much material which is not exactly historical. In addition to these, there is some archaeological material also. Recently the Indian archaeologists have excavated the site of the ancient city, *Hastinapura*. This has been placed between 1000 B.C. and 700 B.C. Therefore the theory that the great Mahabharata war of Kurukshetra was fought in the 15th century B.C. is not fully acceptable. Some scholars fix it at 900 B.C. Anyhow, it is quite clear that the Aryas began to migrate from their earlier settlements and to settle in different regions.

From their settlements, the Aryas spread further into India and by the end of this period they occupied the whole of North India. They also crossed over the Vindhyas and entered the Deccan. Thus, geographical expansion was considerable. The centre of the Aryan civilization was shifted from the North-West and the Panjab to the 'firm middle country' (*Dhruva Madhyamadis*) stretching from the river Saraswati to the plain watered by the great rivers Ganga and Yamuna. This doab was occupied by the Kurus, the Panchalas and some other tribes. The Kosalas, the Kasis, the Videhas, the Vidarbhas and the Magadhas are some other famous people of this period spread over *Aryavarta*. The *Dasyu* Kingdoms of Magadhas, Pundras, Pulindas, Sabaras, Andhras, etc., are mentioned. Of these several families, the Kurus and the Panchalas were important. Parikshita and Janamejaya

of the Kurus are credited with several victories as also with noble qualities. The Panchala King Janaka was a great philosopher intimately associated with the greatest philosopher of the age — Yajnavalkya. These two are often mentioned in the *Upanishads* and the *Aranyakas*, with great respect.

POLITICAL LIFE:

The expansion of the Aryas over such a wide area by means of conquests and amalgamation of tribes resulted into the rise of several kingdoms, big and small. *Rajya, Samrajya, Bhoujya, Vairajya, Svarajya*, etc., were some of the types ranging from the small kingdoms to great empires. Kings also differed in status. *Raja* was a local chief. *Samant* was a subordinate king. *Samrat* was a full sovereign. *Sarvabhouma* or *Ekrat* was the Emperor who aspired to be the king of the whole universe — *Raja Vishva-janina*. Republics or *Ganas* also existed side by side. But monarchical states were more in number.

The King, usually a *Kshatriya*, was elected and anointed at a coronation ceremony. Even when the office of the kingship became hereditary, the formal election was not given up. The coronation was an important ceremony during which the king was to take the oath to protect the people, to act according to *Dharma* (law and justice) and never to be autocratic. He had to visit the houses of the important representatives of the people who were known as *Ratnins*. These included the important officials of the court, his queen and prince, and also *Gramani* and *Suta*. Thus approved by all, the king would rule according to Law or *Dharma*. He was deposed, deported and even killed if he became a tyrant and an oppressor. He must use *Danda* — the power of punishment only for the protection of his subjects and never for his own aggrandisement. The king had in him all the elements of *Indra, Varuna, Agni, Yama, Vayu*, etc., or at least they were invested in him during the coronation ceremony. The king was respected but was never considered divine. The duties, powers, nature of kingship as well as the checks on the same have been clearly explained in *Vedas*, the *Aranyakas*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Smritis* of Yajnavalkya, Narada, Vishnu and

Manu. Endowed with the three powers — "*Trishakti*" — *mantra-shakti* (good counsel), *prabhushakti* (majesty of the king) and *utsahashakti* (power of energy) the king must be devoted to the welfare of his subjects. The state and the entire political order, was based on *Dharma*, existed to promote *Dharma* and was regulated by *Dharma*. It is vital to remember that *Dharma* does not mean and never meant, religion or creed. It means and always did mean Law, Justice, Morality and in brief that which is the basis of the Universal moral order. *Rajadharma* or king's conduct was a branch of this eternal and Universal *Dharma*.

The popular control over the king was still exercised by *Sabha* and *Samiti*, the two assemblies of the *Rigveda*. They are referred to, in the literature of the later *Vedic* period, with more respect. They are described as the twin daughters of *Prajapati* (creator). This description suggests the increased importance as well as the equality of status of these assemblies. The number of the representatives was increased by including those of all the classes. *Gramani* and *Suta* were also included among the "*Raja Kartri*," king makers. The king's stability and prosperity depended upon the complete concord of the assemblies with himself. Some passages of the *Atharvaveda* reveal how fervently the kings prayed for this essential concord. "Popular wrath vented itself in the expulsion of tyrannical kings together with erring officials."

The body of administrative officials of the state was also expanded. In addition to *Purohita* and *Senani*, now there are: *Sangrahitri* (treasurer), *Bhagaduga* (tax-collector), *Suta* (herald or charioteer), *Kshatri* (chamberlain), *Akshavapa* (Superintendent of gambling), *Palagala* (courier), and *Gramani* (leader of the village). *Sachiva*, meaning a minister or head of a department is also mentioned. A regular system of administration, thus, existed. All these were important persons known as *Ratnis*. They had considerable influence on the king and on the people as well. They could not be trifled with. On the contrary, the king had to respect them on special occasions like the coronation, conquests or festivals. They were the real rulers of the state. The king continued to be more or less a constitutional head,

with well-defined duties and powers. His pomp and power varied according to the size of his kingdom and personal strength.

The administration of justice was more elaborate. Small cases in the village were decided by the village council, which appointed a village judge, *Gramyavadin.* Arbitration was the usual method in all civil cases, while the use of ordeal was not unknown when trying criminal cases. The local assembly usually entrusted the work of judicial administration to a small body of its members. *Adhyakshas* or presidents of the boards of justice were appointed by the king and the king himself with his *Sabha*, was the final court of appeal.

Villages continued to be autonomous. Administration of justice, police arrangements, election, education, sanitation, etc., were managed by the village council. Only in case of grave danger the people went to the king for help. Sometimes every village or a group of villages would be considered an independent unit with a chief styled as *raja.* Such small independent kingdoms owed allegiance to the conquering emperor, but were left free in their internal administration. Thus, a large kingdom or an empire was a union of small independent units. The unity of administration could not be effectively achieved in those days, or even to a much later date, as the means of communication and travel were not easy. However, the beginning of a system of provincial administration is found in this period. *Sthapati* and *Shatapati* seem to be the officers entrusted with the task of governing out-lying districts and groups of hundred villages respectively.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

Side by side, there was considerable progress in economic, social and religious life. Thus the foundation of the later Hindu society was laid during this period. In respect of economic life, agriculture continued to be the main occupation, and was considerably developed. The land under cultivation increased. Implements were greatly improved. We hear of ploughs drawn by six, eight, twelve and even twenty-four oxen. The methods of sowing, cutting, reaping and winnowing were just as we see today. This shows that Aryas were greatly advanced in the art

of cultivation. They delighted in working in the fields. Folk-songs and harvest dances seem to have been common. Usually people belonging to a single family worked together and agriculture was a common enterprise. Joint-families were greatly helpful and Aryas prayed to Gods to give them more and more male children so that they could produce more wealth. There was no scarcity of land. There was no class-struggle. Affection was the basis of society.

Rice, wheat and barley were the chief crops. Cotton was also grown. Several minor crops and oilseeds were grown. Vegetables, fruits, etc., were in abundance.

The prosperity of agriculture depended upon the quality and quantity of cattle. Cattle continued to be the chief source of wealth and were reared with kindness. The cow was regarded as the most useful and therefore was called a goddess. It provided milk, ghee, beef, hide and the most important, bulls. The importance of bulls for an agricultural community can be easily seen. Bulls also were regarded as sacred animals and sometimes sacrificed. In addition to the cow and bull, horse, ass, buffalo, goat and sheep were other domesticated animals. They served the Aryas in several ways. Elephants were kept in the royal stables. Several wild animals are mentioned indicating that hunting was a profitable and common occupation. Fishing was fairly common. Bird-catchers seem to have been popular and prosperous.

Agriculture provided work for several artisans. The carpenters, the black-smiths and the tanners prepared the implements. So also the weavers, the potters, etc. provided all sorts of domestic utilities. The village was thus a self-sufficient unit and developed a corporate life.

Though agriculture mainly depended on rain, irrigation was known. Wells were dug in the fields and water was lifted in the leather buckets. River water was also used by means of canals.

Trade and commerce flourished. Barter was in practice, particularly in villages. Cow was used as a unit of measurement of value. There is mention of a gold coin. It is suggested that

commerce was carried on with foreign countries like Babylonia.

It is, perhaps, during this period, that people belonging to different professions began to organize themselves into different groups. Guilds (*Shreni*) of artisans and craftsmen and merchants, are mentioned. Priests, physicians and warriors formed different groups.

The wide range of furniture and utensils suggest that people were rich and had several amenities. Cities began to be developed. The villages were built according to a plan ensuring defence. Houses were quite spacious and comfortable. Weapons of war were commonly used. Metals like gold, silver, copper, bronze and iron were used in the preparation of ornaments, utensils and weapons.

Property was, as a rule, inherited by the sons. Daughters were allowed to hold property with certain limitations. Adoption was in practice. Slaves, however, were in small numbers and were treated more humanely than in any other ancient civilization.

On the whole, the Aryas in the later Vedic period were both industrious and prosperous. We see that the number of occupations was fairly large. It was a society which was properly organized and therefore maintained a high standard of efficiency. Naturally production of wealth increased and with the excellent system of distribution they had, perfect harmony between various groups was possible.

Social Life:

The harmony between various classes and people of different professions was based on the "*Dharma* of class and stage of life" (*Varna-Ashrama-dharma*). The *Dharma*, a general code of conduct is also supplemented by a *Dharma* appropriate to each class and each stage in the life of the individual. Thus were developed the system of *Varna*, an order of society and the system of *Ashrama*, a scheme of life.

The Varna-system:

Varna is often connected with the colour of the Aryas, and

their keen desire to protect it. But the *Varna* was an order of society of Aryas alone and when others were admitted gradually they were absorbed in the four classes. The society was divided into four groups — *Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. Philosophers, scholars, scientists, teachers, priests and all those engaged in study and intellectual pursuits were *Brahmanas*. *Kshatriyas* were the upholders of *Kshatra*, the Law, and therefore, rulers, administrators, soldiers and leaders in war. *Vaishyas* were producers, cattlebreeders, cultivators, tradesmen and artisans. *Shudras* were those who depended only on their physical strength and served the other three classes. In addition to the special functions on which the grouping was based, every Arya had three compulsory duties—*Adhyayana* (study), *Yajana* (sacrifice) and *Dana* (charity). The compulsory duties ensured the equality of status of all the Aryas while the functional grouping expressed the social thought that for each man there was a place in society and a function to fulfil, with its own duties and rights. Birth, at least in the beginning, had nothing to do with this system. *Varna*, as some scholars point out, comes from the word *'Vri'* to choose, and therefore means an order of chosen functions. Every man when he chooses a function must do the duties of that particular profession and it is the *Varna-Dharma*. The emphasis was on duty and every individual must do his duty and thus contribute to the social welfare. The common code — *Samanya Dharma* included the principles of truth, *ahimsa* (non-violence), purity, kindness, etc.

Brahmanas had three special duties — teaching, superintending over sacrifice and acceptance of charity. They had also some privileges such as exemption from tax, milder punishments, claim for special respect, etc. But these privileges were only for the learned, sincere and pious ones, and not for every Brahmana. Professional priests were respected but not entitled to any superior position. Brahmanas were also allowed to follow trade, agriculture or secure positions in the administration as "duties in distress" (*apad-dharma*). At the most a Brahmana could become a chief minister but not a king. The duties of the Brahmanas and other rules of discipline specially devised for them were difficult. The

number of Brahmanas was, and always has been, very small. Kshatriyas were men of action and enjoyed the unique privileges in social organisation. Study and meditation were compulsory and several Kshatriyas distinguished themselves as philosophers. Vaishyas were the largest group engaged in various wealth-producing activities. They could help the rulers and Brahmanas in their duties. A Vaishya was an expert business-man with a specialised knowledge of jewels, metals, cloth, spices, perfumes and trades and crafts. Known for their charity, the Vaishyas promoted learning, religion, art and architecture. They formed guilds (*shreni*) which later on developed into castes. The Shudras were labourers and menials and soon took to agriculture. They had few opportunities for learning or development. They had to do humble service with the only hope of a rebirth in a higher social class. Shudras were of two classes — "Excluded" (*niravasita*) and "not-excluded" (*aniravasita*) — depending upon their character and behaviour. The latter Shudra was soon admitted to professions like agriculture, cattle-breeding, industry and commerce. A Shudra had his own place in the Hindu society and had equal claim to spiritual pursuits. Many devotional songs preach fundamental equality of Man. The duties of *Varna* were to ensure social harmony and welfare only when the *Varna* was chosen. Conduct, and not birth, remained the basis of the *Varna* system.

Varna system is most often confused with the present day caste-system which originated at a much later period and has very little to do with the *Varna* system. "Caste is the development of thousands of years, from the association of many different racial and other groups in a single cultural system. It is impossible to show its origin, conclusively, and we can do little more than faintly trace its development, since early literature paid scant attention to it; but it is practically certain that caste did not originate from the four classes."

An unfortunate feature of the Hindu society is the class of "Untouchables." Originally people serving the Aryas in the menial and unclean tasks, a class of people, known as '*panchamas*,' probably outside the Aryan fold, was developed and they were the untouchables. Criminals, hunters, fishermen, leather-workers,

sweepers, liquor-sellers, etc., were grouped as *Chandalas*, who lived outside the village or the town, as their profession compelled them to do so. *Mlechcha*, or the foreign invader was also another type of untouchable. Both these groups were not untouchable by Law, but by rigidity of practices. As Basham points out, "In fact it was not blood which made a group untouchable, but conduct. Generally, there was no chance of an individual rising in the social scale, but for a group this was possible, over a number of generations, by adopting more orthodox practices and following the rules of Smritis. Thus the Indian class system was always somewhat fluid."

The *Varna* system served the ancient society well. Efficiency of the professions, and harmony among different vocational groups, and preservation of ancient culture are some of the achievements of this system.

> "The Kshatriyas pushed the Aryan colonies into remote and unknown lands, the Brahmanas elaborated and spread the Aryan culture into the newly conquered regions and even far beyond, while the Vaishyas and Shudras ministered to the growing needs of a wealthy people, fast developing a life of ease and luxury, by means of trade, commerce, manufacture, cultivation and various other arts and crafts." (R. C. Majumdar).

> "The scheme of *Varnas* lived, served and survived because it was based on a reasoned philosophy of existence, on a rational perception of the strength of instincts, and on the possibility of conserving them by heredity." (K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar).

The Ashrama System:

The success of the *Varna* system is based on individuals who are duty-conscious. Therefore it was felt that a system regulating the individual's life was also necessary. The scheme of life, the *Ashrama* system came into existence. The aim of life was described as *Purushartha*, a four-fold principle, consisting of *Dharma* (justice), *Artha* (material prosperity), *Kama* (satisfaction of emotional interests) and *Moksha* (salvation). The individual must act according to *Dharma* — justice, must earn wealth in an honest way, must satisfy all the emotional needs without which his

personality would be incomplete and finally he must attain *Moksha*. To achieve this ideal, it was essential that the individual be trained to restrain himself, work hard, to serve society and observe all the duties according to social ethics. In brief, every individual must try to be a useful citizen, contributing his best to the social welfare. For this purpose, the plan of society, i.e., the *Varna* system was created, and to prepare the individual for this purpose the *Ashrama* system was developed.

The hundred-year span of life was divided into four equal *Ashramas* or stages, each being reserved for specific functions. The first one was the period of *Brahmacharya*, for education and training. The student must go to a *Gurukula*, stay there and serve the teacher. He had to follow a rigorous life. He must prepare himself for the next *ashrama*. The primary education was given by the elders. But higher education was given in *Gurukulas* which developed later into great universities. *Gurukula* was the hermitage of *rishis* — teachers, usually far from urban crowds. There the teacher provided the students with boarding and lodging, maintained intimate and affectionate relations and instructed them in all arts and sciences. Higher knowledge in philosophy and religion was imparted to a selected few. Ordinarily the instruction was oral and began with the study of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. Later on, logic, ethics, history, grammar, astronomy, mathematics, etc., were included in the curriculum. Methods of teaching were both interesting and convincing. Several passages in the *Upanishads* indicate a high standard of learning, direct method of instruction, close relations between the teacher and his students, and a wide range of subjects taught.

There were many centres of *Vedic* learning and these formed different schools of thought. *Vedic* scholars exchanged their views by occasional assemblies under the patronage of generous and enlightened kings. Debates were commonly held to discuss difficult problems of philosophy and religion.

The teacher was the chief figure in the system of learning. Instruction was oral and therefore the students were at the mercy of the teacher. Teachers led an ideal life and maintained a high moral character. Students had to learn by service and observation.

The student's life was not easy; he had to do all sorts of manual labour. Therefore only sincere students could gain the most important part of knowledge by pleasing the teacher with their service. The teacher, when he was satisfied about the attainments of the student gave him the last sermon, usually known as *Snatakopadesha* (advice to the graduate). In this are told the basic principles of the individual's behaviour in society. He was asked to speak the truth, to live according to *Dharma*, to regard parents, elders and teachers as gods, to practise charity, to observe non-violence and such other principles which constitute *Samanya Dharma*.

The second stage was *Grihasthashrama* — certainly the most important, from the social point of view. Here the individual married, maintained the house-hold, shouldered the family responsibilities and served the community by co-operating in civic affairs. Hospitality, charity, religion and rituals were practised. He must work and produce wealth. The individual must fulfil obligations to his family. But during all these twenty-five years, he must prepare himself for the next *ashrama*, of retirement. This enabled the individual to do his duty with a sense of detachment.

The third *ashrama*, *Vanaprastha*, was the period of retirement. The individual should, at 50, retire to the jungle leaving property, family and responsibilities to his sons. Here again he must spend his life in the study and teaching of religion and philosophy. By practice of meditation and detachment, he will be prepared for the last *ashrama* — *Sanyasa*. This *ashrama* is one of complete renunciation. The individual dedicates himself to the service of God and society. He wanders from place to place teaching, preaching, reforming and serving. At the end, he will attain *Moksha* or Liberation.

This system of four *ashrama* was not compulsory for all. Especially the last two — *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa* — were difficult. Only men of special aptitude could accept them and live upto their ideals. But the influence of this system sobered the people to a great extent. Unnecessary greed, attachment, love for excessive wealth, etc., were discouraged. The system emphasised the social obligations of the individual. During the course of the four stages, there was scope for individual development coupled with social service.

Thus the interests of society and the individual were harmonised. A group of pious, selfless sages greatly promoted the study of religion and philosophy. The house-holder, the village council, the king and his councils — all these were watched by the sages and were corrected if necessary. Law of morality, therefore, developed and society was based on a firm footing.

> "Indian society was kept from disintegration by the sublime conception of the scheme of *Varna* and *Ashrama*, which gave its women and men a clear vision of the spiritual winning post, and showed them how to order their lives and mould their actions in order that they may, in the fullness of time, or even in this life itself, triumphantly reach it." (K. V. R. Aiyangar).

FAMILY, RITUALS, ETC.:

Social organisation, thus reached almost its perfection during this time. Family continued to be its basis and the size of the family increased. Father was the head of the family. He led his family in prayer, sacrifice, agricultural activities and other social customs. The mother also occupied a position of respect and authority. Joint families were quite helpful for an agricultural community. They also fostered the spirit of corporate life.

Marriage came to be an important social institution. Eight forms of marriage are mentioned. Polygamy certainly prevailed and polyandry and inter-marriages are also referred to. Theoretically at least wife was still given a high position. Her education was not neglected. Fine arts like dancing, music and painting were common. Some women like Gargi and Maitreyi were learned and could challenge Yajnavalkya, the greatest philosopher of the age.

The rituals, *Samskaras*, were as many as forty. Birth, marriage, death and the like began to be observed in specified manners. These rituals were means of promoting healthy social life. Numerous customs and manners were established. The complicated method of performing the rituals increased the importance of the priestly class. In addition to the rituals, several festivals were observed.

There was, however, little change in the dress and ornaments. The same entertainments as in the earlier period — hunting, gambling, drinking, music, dances, etc., were popular during this period.

LITERATURE :

The contribution of the Aryas to the growth of literature, is perhaps, the most important. The size and quality of their literary works proclaim the greatness of the people. Tenacity, hard-work, love of nature, thirst for knowledge, clarity of thought and several other characteristics of the Aryas are reflected in their literature. The fact that the literary works were learnt and taught by oral method speaks about their devotion to literature, learning and teaching. A brief description of the important branches of *Vedic* literature will amply prove the truth of these remarks.

The *Vedas* are four — *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Of these *Rigveda* is the earliest and most important. It is a book of prayer containing more than a thousand hymns arranged in ten *Mandalas*. They are addressed to various gods, such as *Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Ushas*. There are beautiful passages containing vivid descriptions of political, social and economic activities. It is a very important source of information about the life of Aryas. The poetry is admirable. *Rigveda* also deals with basic philosophical problems. This *Veda*, like the other three *Vedas*, is believed to be an inspired revelation to the seekers after truth. The Hindus regard the *Vedas* as the source of all knowledge and authority for religion, philosophy and ethics.

Yajurveda in two parts — *Krishna* (mixed) and *Shukla* (pure), treats of the principles and practice of *Yajna* or sacrifice. The simple rite was elaborated and a technique was developed. *Samaveda* is only a selection of hymns from the *Rigveda* set to music for recitation. *Atharvaveda* is a miscellany of social customs, manners, magic and witchcraft. It also deals with medicine and some verses are of great philosophical interest. This also is regarded as a valuable source of history.

The commentaries on the above *Vedas* form the second group of works. There are three types of commentaries. *Brahmanas* — dealing with the sacrifice and rituals; they follow the path of duty or *Karma-marga*. *Aranyakas* deal with philosophy; they stress the path of knowledge. *Upanishads* also are treatises on high philosophical problems. They are about two hundred in number and are regarded as important philosophical works. They discuss the

theory of Atman or Brahman. They tell us about the methods of teaching. The style is simple and pleasing. For example here is a prayer for Truth:

From the unreal lead me to the real!
From darkness lead me to light!
From death lead me to immortality!

Short sentences full of meaning make the *Upanishads* easy to remember while interesting stories and illustrations make them a lively reading. The *Upanishads* are considered as the greatest work of art and philosophy, both by Indian and Western thinkers. They contain the very cream of Indian thought which reached its highest summit during that period. The ideals set before the Aryan student reveal the achievements of the Aryas in the realm of religion, philosophy and social morals.

The third branch of literature contains the *Vedangas* — or the Limbs of *Vedas*. Sciences such as Grammar, Phonetics, Astronomy are dealt with in them. *Upavedas* or supplementary *Vedas* consist of some more sciences like Medicine (*Ayurveda*), Archery (*Dhanurveda*), Architecture (*Shilpa*), etc., and form the fourth group. The fifth and again the important group is that of *Sutras*. These are divided into three groups — (a) *Shrouta* (Rituals), (b) *Grihya* — (Domestic ceremonies), (c) *Dharma* (Law). They discuss in this way all social problems. They are in simple prose. The Dharmasutra deals with the social and moral Laws. Several scholars like Manu, Vishnu, Yajnavalkya and Narada have written elaborate commentaries on this. These works form the basis of Hindu Law. Their discussion helps us to solve many of the present day social problems. This reveals their profound knowledge of human nature.

Thus *Vedic* literature is very wide in scope and quite deep in insight and analysis.

RELIGION:

Hinduism during this period achieved all its characteristics. Prayer, worship of God and sacrifice were the chief religious duties. Truth or Reality was the goal. Religion was not an abstract idea but an all-embracing force influencing all walks of life. Hinduism

was very wide and included all sections of society. Everyone was bound by a common search for truth. Purity of life and conduct were highly stressed. Fourfold *Purushartha* — *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* — was the guiding principle of life. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* were the authority on religious ideals but experience, through study and reflection was their real basis. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* were interpreted in many different ways by sages in the light of their own spiritual experiences. This gave rise to paths like *Jainism, Buddhism,* etc.

The gods in the earlier period now became secondary as the new gods — *Vishnu, Brahma* and *Maheshwar* — attained a higher position. These also were mere symbols and the *Real One* was *Atman* or *Brahman.*

The theory of re-birth and the doctrine of *Karma* (action) were also developed. To escape the cycle of birth and death man must realize the nature of *Brahman.* "Sacrifice and Rituals were the means of improving conduct, of meditation and of conscious approach to religion." The technique and method of sacrifice became elaborate. *Rajasuya, Vajapeya* and *Ashvamedha* required the services of hundreds of expert priests and could be performed only by kings and emperors. The difficult and complicated procedure of sacrifices and the large number of rituals were responsible for the creation and increasing superiority of the priestly class. Every Arya had three primary duties. *Adhyayana* (learning), *Yajana* (sacrifice) and *Dana* (charity). Brahmanas had three more duties —*Adhyapana* (teaching), *Yajana* (superintending sacrifice) and *Pratigriha* (receipt of gifts). Gradually the sacrifice and rituals came to be over-emphasised and lost their true spiritual meaning.

But the philosophy made steady progress and reached its perfection in the idea of *Atman* or *Brahman.* The *Upanishads* are the main philosophical works. They provided material to all different schools of philosophy, developed during the later period. The six important schools of thought — *Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa* and *Vedanta* — can be traced to this period. (See the last chapter for a brief explanation of these systems.) They discuss the philosophical problems raised in the *Upanishads* and the *Sutras.*

EPICS AND PURANAS:

Epics

The Epics are long narrative poems. Their theme is grand and the style is in keeping with the grandeur of the theme. Kings, queens, nobles, courts, forests, seas and wars are all elaborately described. The two Indian Epics have all these characteristics and present a picture of society of the period. Both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are grand epics, rich in theme and style. *Mahabharata* is the longest epic written in any language of the world. The epics are literary compositions, describing in glorious terms the heroic deeds and virtues of Kshatriya princes. There have been numerous additions to them, especially to the *Mahabharata*. Therefore, the epics as they are, are a huge miscellany of treatises on history, religion, politics, philosophy, ethics and sociology. They are respected as sacred works. The main purpose of reading them is religious satisfaction. At the same time, they tell us a lot about the society and the people. Political theories, administrative policies, philosophical discussions, moral codes and the like, that are treated in the Epics are of a high order and reveal a rare type of intellectual achievement. The authorship of the *Mahabharata* is traditionally ascribed to *Vyasa* who is the "arranger" of the *Vedas*. The *Ramayana* seems to be the work of a single poet, Valmiki who is regarded as the first poet.

Both the epics have undergone alterations and hence it is difficult to fix their dates. However, scholars agree that they assumed their present forms by the third or the fourth century, A.D. though their beginnings must be several centuries earlier. Even though they are actually composed later, they deal with the incidents that occurred in the *Vedic* period. However, the *Ramayana* is believed to be composed earlier than the *Mahabharata*.

The historical importance of these two epics is really very great. They reflect the Hindu life and society of the period. The characteristics, virtues, vices and ideals of the people are painted vividly. They stress the importance of the Kshatriyas, show deep respect for the Brahmanas and describe the political, economic, religious and social conditions of the age. In this way, their historical importance cannot be exaggerated. As already pointed out,

the epics were composed over a long period. It is, therefore, difficult to define the epic age. The incidents, episodes, customs, manners, religious practices, etc., that are mirrored in the epics should be taken as those of the ancient world, without reference to any precise date.

The greatness of our epics consists in their comprehensive character. "Everything under the sun" is found in them. They provide both entertainment and instruction to all — young and old, the rich and poor, illiterate and the scholars. They have a universal appeal. They are read and recited in India by people in their languages.

Ramayana:

The *Ramayana* is the story of Rama, a prince of King Dasharatha of Ayodhya. By an unfortunate promise, given to Kaikeyi, Dasharatha is compelled to send Rama to the forest for fourteen years. Rama being a devoted son and respecting the honour of his father's word accepts the order and proceeds to Dandakaranya, with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. There he fights the demons who are destroying the sacrifice and penance of the Aryan sages. Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka (Ceylon), took away Sita by deceit. Being informed about this by Jatayu, the two brothers proceed to the distant South. On the way they secure the help of Sugriva and Hanumanta. Ultimately, they succeed in killing Ravana and getting Sita back. They fly back to Ayodhya. Rama ascends the throne which is kept vacant by Bharata — another faithful step-brother of his. After a time, Rama has to abandon Sita just to please a section of his subjects. This incident of banishing his devoted and faithful wife against his own will is described in a touching manner. Incidents like this have been themes for literary and ethical works. Sita, however, by virtue of her purity and extraordinary ability of her twin sons, wins back her husband's confidence.

All the principal characters are symbols of Aryan ideals. Rama is a brave warrior, faithful son, loving husband and conscientious ruler. He is perfect to the extent of being an *avatar* of God. Lakshmana and Bharata are faithful and affectionate brothers

revealing the Aryan respect for joint family. Sita is the ideal of Indian womanhood. Devoted to her husband she willingly accepts all sufferings and privations. Patience, suffering, devotion and chastity are all personified in her. The opposite character, Ravana is also brave, civilised, powerful but he has no character. The *Ramayana* is the story of the triumph of the good over the evil.

Historically, the significance of the epic lies in the Aryan adventures in the south. Non-Aryan tribes were civilized and in some respects superior to the Aryans. Social significance of the epic cannot be missed. A picture of the then society is clearly drawn.

The king was the central figure. Morals, religion, welfare and everything else depended upon his character and behaviour. He was supreme but he must obey *Dharma* and respect the views of his subjects. It was the duty of the king to maintain the social order. The society was based on the fourfold *Varna* system and it worked in complete harmony. The Brahmana sages were both feared and respected. But they remained aloof from the worldly affairs. The sacrifices such as *Ashvamedha, Rajasuya* were celebrated and all domestic rituals were observed. People had high regard for individual and social virtues. They were prosperous and happy. Several customs, manners, amusements, beliefs and superstitions are mentioned in the epic. Gambling, drinking and hunting were commonly condemned. Ordeals were resorted to, in the trial of extraordinary crimes. Women had high position, and chastity was their ideal. *Ramarajya* has come to mean an ideal state.

Mahabharata:

The *Mahabharata* is the story of the Kurus and the Pandavas, and the main theme of the epic is the great war between them. The Kurus or Kauravas defeat the five Pandavas in gambling and compel them to dwell in the forests for 12 years. The Pandavas claim their share of the empire after this period but the Kauravas deny it. Hence the battle. Kings from all parts of India participate on one side or the other. Pandavas come out successful and establish that Right will ultimately win over the Wrong. During the course

of the battle, Shri Krishna preaches the *Bhagavadgita* to Arjuna, the third Pandava.

The epic is a collection of about one lakh verses and embraces the whole of life. Several legends and long discourses on political, social, moral and religious topics are included. Many episodes and fables are quite popular. The stories of Shakuntala, Damayanti, Bhishma, Karna and Savitri are well-known. The *Mahabharata* is considered not merely as a literary composition but also a sacred work for the education of the people. The characters like Dharma, Arjuna, Draupadi and Vidura are ideals personified. The most impressive character is that of Shri Krishna — the greatest philosopher-statesman of all times. On account of the predominant role played by Krishna, the whole of *Mahabharata* has achieved a great purpose of religious, political and philosophical enlightenment. Draupadi is regarded as an ideal of womanhood. Shakuntala and Damayanti also represent the noblest types. Thus *Mahabharata* is an epic of universal appeal.

From the historical point of view, this great epic gives a picture of political and social life of the period. We see that the whole of India was more or less Aryanised and in all parts powerful monarchies existed. A learned exposition of political principles and policies is included. The several kingdoms, fights between the different dynasties, sacrifices like *Ashvamedha* and *Rajasuya* — all these are vividly described. But it seems that numerous interpolations were made at different periods. The general pattern of divided India and Krishna's attempt at its unification are easily seen.

The picture of society given in the *Mahabharata* is vivid. The society was based on *Varna* system. The Kshatriyas played the leading part but the Brahmanas were respected most. The Brahmanas were teachers, warriors, politicians and philosophers. Institutions like family, private property were established. Rituals and sacrifices were predominant in religious life. Shri Krishna in the *Bhagavadgita* has tried to correlate all the ways of spiritual attainment. Social life was interesting. Gambling, drinking, hunting, festivals, picnics, etc., are mentioned. People were refined, educated, prosperous and had a very high sense of social morality.

Bhagavadgita:

The *Bhagavadgita* or *Gita* as it is popularly known is a portion of the *Mahabharata*. It is the song of the Supreme God and is considered as a sacred text of religion. *Gita* is said to be the most beautiful philosophical song in any language.

In the course of the great battle, Arjuna, the Pandava hero is faced with a moral problem. He finds it difficult and immoral to kill his own relatives in the battle, just for the sake of an empire. Shri Krishna who is his charioteer, dispels his doubts by a long and learned discourse on duties of man and immortality of the soul. Here we see a concise treatment of all philosophical problems. Described as the essence of the *Upanishads*, *Gita* discusses several ways of self-realization. It is the most commented work and is the source of some conflicting schools of thought. *Anasaktiyoga* or doing one's duty without any desire for reward is considered to be the essence of the teachings of Shri Krishna. A man is concerned with his duty and not with its reward (*Karmanyevadhikaraste, ma phaleshu kadachana*). Man must not shirk from his duty. At the same time, he must gain knowledge and do his duty in a selfless way. Knowledge and duty together bring success and prosperity. (*Yatra yogeshwarh Krishno, Yatra Partho Dhanurdharah*
Tatra Shrirvijayo bhutirdhruva nitirmatirmama).

Puranas:

The *Puranas* are collections of traditions, myths, rituals, morals, religious practices and cosmic ideas. They deal with the exploits of gods and heroic princes. Some *Puranas* give the names of several kings of different dynasties, in succession. Some others discuss principles of philosophy.

The date of the *Puranas* cannot be fixed. They seem to have been in existence since the *Vedic* age. Some scholars place them as late as 300-600 A.D.

There are eighteen *Puranas* according to the tradition. But actually many more are found. There are also eighteen *Upapuranas* or supplementary legends. As this form of literature appeals to the minds of masses, preachers of different cults and sects have

written *Puranas* of various types. The main purpose of *Puranas* seems to be to propagate good conduct, morals and to create in the minds of people the fear of God. They also set out punishments to be given to sinners. The cults of Vishnu, Shiva, Jina, Buddha, etc., have been preached through the *Puranas*. Among the *Puranas*, *Vayu Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Markandeya Purana*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Bhavishya Purana*, are well-known and are useful sources of history.

Being devoted to sectarian purposes, *Puranas* are not always reliable for historical or scientific inquiry. Descriptions of Heaven and Hell are vivid and create a sense of awe and respect for God and religion. Some *Puranas*, however, contain useful material regarding sciences, customs, manners, religious practices, etc. The lineal order of kings given in some *Puranas* is of some use in fixing the order of events in the ancient period. The *Puranas* preserve the ideas and ideals of the Aryas on various aspects of life including their superstitions, beliefs and dogmas.

SUMMARY

THE ARYAS:

The word *Arya* means noble, elderly, respected, high-born. It is used in this sense only, in all Indian literary and religious works. It does not reveal any racial or linguistic distinction. Modern scholars have now come to understand this term in the cultural context only.

The people of the *Vedic* India called themselves Aryas as distinct from others who did not accept the *Vedic* civilization, whom they called *anaryas* or *dasyus*. But it is necessary to remember that both the *Aryas* and *Dasyus* lived together, belonged to the same race.

The view that the *Aryas* came to India from somewhere outside India is not supported by any convincing evidence. On the contrary, there is some evidence to show that *Aryas* migrated out of India and settled in different parts of the world to spread culture.

SAPTA SINDHU REGION:

Though human beings existed in different parts of India since times immemorial, the *Vedic* civilization flourished in the region of the *Sapta Sindhu*, extending from the modern Uttara Pradesh to the East Afghanistan and watered by the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Sindhu and other three rivers.

Date of the Rigveda:

According to Indian tradition the date of the *Rigvedic* civilization goes back to about 7000 B.C. Modern scholars have given dates ranging from 6000 B.C. to 1000 B.C. But as Winternitz points out none of these dates is proved by facts; they are only assumptions. He puts the *Vedic* civilization during the period from about 2500 B.C. to 800 B.C. The traditional date is from 7000 B.C. to 600 B.C.

Aryas did not invade India. They did not destroy the cities of the Sindhu Valley. They were not barbarians. On the contrary, the *Rigveda* shows that the *Aryas* were natives of India, were highly cultured and laid down the foundations of the Hindu culture.

EARLY VEDIC SOCIETY:

Political Life:

Families formed the *grama* (village) and a number of *gramas* formed the *vish* and *jana*. *Gramani* was the leader of the village, *vishpati* and *janapati* were in charge of the other divisions. The state was governed by *Rajan*, who was usually elected. He was guided by two assemblies, the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* and assisted in his duties by the *Purohita* and the *Senani*. King was not an absolute ruler.

Social Life:

The *Purushasukta* refers to the four classes — the *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas* (*Rajanyas*), *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. Several professional groups are also mentioned. But the caste-system had not fully developed.

Family was the basic unit of society. A large number of relatives lived together and shared life joyfully. Father was the head of the family; mother enjoyed a position of respect and authority. Marriage was the basis of family. It was considered as a sacred bond. No divorce was allowed. Women enjoyed several privileges and were highly respected. Some of them were educated and proficient in fine arts. They wore beautiful ornaments.

Dress was simple. People enjoyed both vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet. Music, dance, festivals, gambling and drinking were the means of entertainment. Races, hunting etc. were the popular sports.

Economic Life:

Living in the villages, the *Aryas* mainly depended upon agriculture and cattle-rearing. There were craftsmen such as the carpenter, potter, smith, tanner, mason, weaver etc. Of the domesticated animals, the cow, the bull and the horse were useful and respected. Trade was limited and barter was in vogue.

Religion:

The *Aryas* worshipped Nature. The Sun, *Agni, Indra, Varuna, Maruts*, etc. were the favourite gods. Prayer and sacrifice were the main religious activities. Though a number of gods are mentioned, the *Rigvedic* sages knew and believed in a single, all-pervading and all-powerful God.

LATER VEDIC SOCIETY:

Expansion:

During this period the Aryan civilization spread not only all over the North but also the South. Several sages led by Agastya went to South and settled in different parts. We get a very good description of this cultural expansion in the Epics and the *Puranas*.

Political Life:

Kingdoms of varying sizes came to be established, the highest goal being that of the *Samrajya* (empire). The ideal of a universal monarch was cherished most.

Even after kingship had become hereditary, the elements of the elective system were retained. At the coronation ceremony, representatives of the various sections of the people expressed their consent by participating in it. The chosen king was to take an oath of good and just rule. The *Sabha* and *Samiti* became more powerful.

The ruler was assisted by several officers — the *Purohita*, the *Senani*, the treasurer, the tax-collector, the chamberlain, *Gramani*, etc.

Administration of justice became elaborate. The village-councils decided small cases and only important ones came before the royal court. Ordeals were in vogue in the trial of criminal cases.

Villages continued to be autonomous. All important aspects of village life were managed by the village council. The villages, the *vish* or *jana* were more or less autonomous units of a kingdom. The kingdom or the empire was not a highly centralised unit. It was a sort of federal state.

Economic Life:

The land under cultivation expanded and the implements were greatly improved. Rice, wheat, barley, cotton, vegetables, fruits, etc. were grown in abundance. The cow, the horse, the bull, elephant etc. were important domesticated animals. Irrigation was considerably improved.

All the professions and crafts mentioned above thrived in this period. They organised into guilds (*shrenis*). Trade and commerce flourished. Cities increased in number as well as in size.

On the whole, the *Aryas* in the later *Vedic* period were both industrious

and prosperous. We see that the number of occupations was fairly large. It was a society which was properly organized and therefore maintained a high standard of efficiency. Naturally production of wealth increased and with the excellent system of distribution they had, perfect harmony between various groups was possible.

SOCIAL LIFE:

Varna System:

The society was divided into four groups—*Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. Philosophers, scholars, scientists, teachers, priests and all those engaged in study and intellectual pursuits were *Brahmanas*. *Kshatriyas* were the upholderrs of *Kshatra* the Law, and therefore, rulers, administrators, soldiers and leaders in war formed this *varna*. *Vaishyas* were producers, cattle-breeders, cultivators, tradesmen and artisans. *Shudras* were those who depended on their physical strength and served the rest.

Every *Arya* had three compulsory duties — *Adhyayana* (study), *Yajana* (sacrifice) and *Dana* (charity). The compulsory duties ensure the equality of status of all the *Aryas* while the functional grouping expressed the social thought that for each man there was a place in society and a function to fulfil, with its own duties and rights.

Brahmanas had three special duties — teaching, superintending over sacrifice and acceptance of charity. They had also some privileges such as exemption from tax, milder punishments, claim for special respect etc. But these privileges were only for the learned, sincere and pious ones, and not for every *Brahmana*.

Kshatriyas were men of action and therefore enjoyed the unique privileges. Study and meditation were compulsory and several *Kshatriyas* distinguished themselves as philosophers.

Vaishyas were the largest group engaged in various wealth-producing activities. They could help the rulers and *Brahmanas* in their duties. A *Vaishya* was an expert business-man with a specialised knowledge of jewels, metals, cloth, spices, perfumes and all trades and crafts.

Varna system is most often confused with the present day caste-system which originated at a much later period. The caste-system has little to do with the *Varna* system.

The *Varna* system served the ancient society well. Efficiency of the professions, harmony among different vocational groups, and preservation of culture were some of the achievements of this system.

Ashrama System:

The aim of life was described as *Purushartha*, a four-fold principle, consisting of *Dharma* (justice), *Artha* (material prosperity), *Kama* (satisfaction of emotional interests) and *Moksha* (salvation).

A hundred-year span of life was divided into four equal *Ashramas* or stages, each being devoted for specific functions. The first was *Brahmacharya*, for education and training. The student went to a Gurukula, stayed there and served the teacher. He had to follow a rigorous life. He prepared himself for the succeeding *ashramas*.

The second was *Grihasthashrama* — certainly the most important. Here the individual married, maintained the house-hold, shouldered family responsibilities and served the community by co-operating in civic affairs. Hospitality, charity, religion and rituals were practised. He worked and produced wealth. The individual fulfilled obligations to his family.

The third *ashrama* — *Vanaprastha* — was the period of retirement. The individual should, at 50, retire to the jungle leaving property, family and responsibilities to his sons. Here again he spent his life in study and teaching of religion and philosophy. By the practice of meditation and detachment, he would be prepared for the last *ashrama* — *Sanyasa*, an ashrama of complete renunciation. The individual dedicated himself to the service of God and the society. He wandered from place to place teaching, preaching, reforming and serving.

Family, Rituals, etc.

Father was the head of the family. He led his family in prayer, sacrifice, agricultural activities and other social functions. The mother occupied a position of respect and authority. Joint families were quite helpful for an agricultural community. They fostered corporate life.

Marriage came to be an important social institution. Eight forms of marriage are mentioned. Polygamy certainly prevailed and polyandry and inter-marriages are referred to.

The rituals — *Samskaras* were as many as forty. Birth, marriage, death began to be observed in specified manners. The rituals were means of promoting a healthy social life and numerous customs and manners came to be established.

Literature:

The *Vedas* are four in number — *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Of these *Rigveda* is the earliest and most important. It is a book of prayer containing more than one thousand hymns arranged in ten *mandalas*. They are addressed to various gods, such as Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Ushas, etc. There are beautiful passages containing vivid descriptions of political, social and economic activities. It is an important source of information about the life of *Aryas*. The poetry is admirable.

Yajurveda in two parts — *Krishna* (mixed) and *Shukla* (pure), treats of the principles and practice of *Yajna* or sacrifice. The simple rite was elaborated and the technique was developed. *Samaveda* is only a selection of

hymns from the *Rigveda* set to music for recitation. *Atharvaveda* is a miscellany of social customs, manners, magic and witchcraft. It deals with medicine and some verses are of great theosophical interest. This is regarded as a valuable source of history.

The commentaries on the above *Vedas* form the second group of works. There are three types of commentaries. The *Brahmanas* — dealing with the sacrifice and rituals. The *Aranyakas* deal with philosophy: they stress the path of knowledge. The *Upanishads* also are treatises on high philosophical problems.

The third branch of literature contains the *Vedangas* — or the Limbs of the *Vedas*. Sciences such as Grammar, Phonetics, Astronomy are dealt with in them. *Upavedas* or supplementary *Vedas* consist of some more sciences like Medicine (*Ayurveda*), Archery (*Dhanurveda*), Architecture (*Shilpa*) etc., form the fourth group.

An important group is that of the *Sutras*. These are divided into three kinds — (a) *Shrouta* (Rituals), (b) *Grihya* — (Domestic ceremonies), (c) *Dharma* (Law of life). They discuss in this way all social problems.

Religion:

Prayer, worship and sacrifice were chief religious duties. Truth or Reality was the goal. Religion was not an abstract idea but an all-embracing force which influenced all walks of life.

The Gods in the earlier period now became secondary as the new Gods — Vishnu, Brahma and Maheshwar attained a higher position. These also were mere symbols and the Real One was *Atman* or *Brahman*.

The theory of re-birth and the doctrine of *Karma* (action) were developed. To escape the cycle of birth and death man must realize the nature of *Brahman*.

The technique and method of sacrifice became elaborate. *Rajasuya*, *Vajapeya* and *Ashvamedha* required the services of hundreds of expert priests and could be performed only by kings and emperors.

Every *Arya* had three primary duties. *Adhyayana* (learning), *Yajana* (sacrifice) and *Dana* (charity). The Brahmanas had three more duties — *Adhyapana* (teaching), *Yajana* (superintending sacrifice) and *Pratigriha* (receipt of gifts).

Epics and Puranas:

Epics:

The historical importance of the two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* is really very great. They reflect the Hindu life and society of the period. The characteristics, virtues, and vices and ideals of the people are painted vividly. They stress the importance of the Kshatriyas, show deep respect for the Brahmanas and describe the political, economic, religious and social conditions of the age.

The greatness of our epics consists in their comprehensive character. "Everything under the sun" is found in them. They provide both entertainment and instruction to all — young and old, the rich and poor, illiterate and the scholars. They have a universal appeal. They are read and recited in India by people in their respective languages.

Bhagavadgita:

The *Bhagavadgita* or *Gita* as it is popularly known is a portion of the *Mahabharata.* It is the song of the Supreme God and is considered as a sacred text of religion. *Gita* is said to be the most beautiful philosophical song in any language.

Anasaktiyoga or doing one's duty without any desire for reward is the essence of the teachings of Shri Krishna. A man is concerned with his duty and not with its reward (*Karmanyevadhikaraste, ma phaleshu kadachana*). Man must not shirk from his duty. At the same time, he must gain knowledge and do his duty in a selfless way. Knowledge and duty together bring success and prosperity.

Puranas:

There are 18 *Puranas* according to the tradition. But actually many more are found. There are also 18 *Upapuranas* or supplementary legends.

The main purpose of *Puranas* was to propagate religion, morals and to create in the minds of people, fear of God. They set out punishment for sinners.

Among the *Puranas, Vayu* Purana, *Matsya* Purana, *Vishnu* Purana, *Markandeya* Purana, *Bhagavata* Purana, *Skanda* Purana, *Bhavishya* Purana etc. are well-known and are useful sources of history.

The *Puranas* preserve the ideas and ideals of the *Aryas* on various aspects of life including their superstitions, beliefs, and dogmas.

4

ENLIGHTENMENT

JAINISM — BUDDHISM — EARLY KINGDOMS AND REPUBLICS — FOREIGN INVASIONS — CIVILIZATION.

JAINISM:

THE popular belief that Vardhamana Mahavira was the founder of Jainism is wrong. He only revived and organized it properly. Jainism originated long before him and there were 23 *Tirthankaras* or Prophets before Mahavira. He was the twenty-fourth. No historical material is available about the first 22 *Tirthankaras*. The 23rd *Tirthankara* seems to have been a historical figure. He was Parshwanatha, the son of King Ashvasena of Varanasi. He lived 250 years before Mahavira and preached the basic principles of Jainism. His main teachings were:—

1. To avoid injury to life;
2. To be truthful;
3. Not to steal; and
4. Not to possess any property.

These principles were fairly established but did not become as popular as those of Buddhism. Jainism was given a new life by Mahavira, who was a senior contemporary of Gautama Buddha.

Vardhamana was the son of a Kshatriya chief of Kundagram in Vaishali. He left the palace and practised severe penance. He

attained supreme knowledge (*Keval Jnana*). Since he controlled and conquered the *Indriyas* (senses), he is known as *Mahavira* or *Jina* (conqueror). His disciples are known as the *Jainas* or the *Nirgranthas* (free from fetters). He wandered in the country for about 30 years preaching the principles of Jainism. It is probable that both Mahavira and Buddha met each other and discussed their teachings.

Mahavira accepted and taught the four teachings of Parshwanath to which he added the fifth — the practice of chastity. He also emphasised the *Triratna* (three jewels)—(a) right knowledge, (b) right vision (c) right conduct. The unity and universality of life was stressed and the principle of ahimsa or non-injury was carried to the extreme. Jainism denies the existence of God. Everyone must pay for his sins by rebirth and suffering. In this way, the Jainas believe in the theories of *Karma* and rebirth. To avoid a sinful life, Mahavira advised the people to control their senses. He advised a life of austerity, and the code of life for monks was really rigorous. According to him, *Prayopaveshana* or death by starvation was the sure way for *Nirvana* or salvation.

Jainism could not become as popular as Buddhism, as its principles are difficult to practise. Still, owing to its excellent organisation, sincere and devoted scholars and some powerful kings, Jainism spread all over India. According to Jaina legends, Chandragupta Maurya abdicated his throne and became a Jaina monk. Many Jaina monks have left literary and philosophical works of great merit.

In the days of famine, during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, several Jainas found it difficult to adhere strictly to their religion. They migrated to the South, under the leadership of Bhadrabahu and settled in Karnataka. The gigantic figure of Gomateshwar and several Kannada classics stand testimony to the kind patronage given to Jaina scholars by the kings in the South. After the famine, some of them returned to the North and found that their co-religionists had deviated from the strict code of life. The schism between the two sects — *Shvetambaras* (clad in white) and *Digambaras* (Nudes) became marked henceforth.

Jaina scholars have contributed to the religious and secular

literature as well. Philosophy, Mathematics, Poetry and Sciences were all studied by them. The number of Jainas is not big but they are a powerful community in India.

THE JAINA LITERATURE:

Mahavira taught orally, through conversation with his disciples. The principles of Jainism were preserved by oral tradition in the 14 *Purvas*, known completely to Bhadrabahu alone. On his death, another great *acharya* Sthulabhadra called a council of Jaina scholars at Pataliputra (third century B.C.), to reconstruct the old canon into 12 *Angas*. This was accepted by the *Shvetambaras* only. The *Digambaras* wrote their own scriptures many of which are yet unpublished. The *Angas* were finally arranged at another council at Vallabhi during the fifth century A.D. Gradually, the literature was extended to include several branches. Some of these are:—

1. The 12 *Angas*, containing the principles of Jainism, rules of discipline for monks, refutation of heretic doctrines, parallel stories of monks and their disciples, and miscellaneous doctrines.
2. The 12 *Upangas*, attached to every *Anga*, are mostly dogmatic and mythological. The dialogue between a monk Kesi and a King Paesi given in the second *upanga* is interesting. Astronomy, geography and cosmology are treated in some of them.
3. The 10 *Prakirnas* are verses regarding subjects connected with Jaina doctrines.
4. The six *Chheda Sutras* contain disciplinary rules for monks and nuns and legends to illustrate them. The third one is attributed to Bhadrabahu and is best known as *Kalpasutra*, telling the story of Mahavira. A list of different Jaina schools and their founders as the rules of conduct for the monks.
5. The four *Mulasutras* are valuable Jaina texts. They are mostly parables, maxims, dialogues and are in verse.
6. Four miscellaneous texts dealing with various topics are cyclopaedic in nature. Of them *Nandisutra* and *Anuogadara* are famous.

In addition to this canonical literature, the Jaina scholars are respectfully remembered for their valuable Sanskrit works on literary, scientific and religious subjects. They have contributed to the Prakrit and Dravidian languages. They are some of the earliest Tamil and Kannada poets.

BUDDHISM:

LIFE OF BUDDHA:

Siddhartha was the son of Shuddhodhana, a Shakya chief of Kapilavastu. Gautama was the family name. Some writers, therefore, prefer to call him as Siddhartha Gautama or Gautama Buddha. He is also known as Shakyamuni as he comes from the Shakya clan. His birth-date is a matter of dispute but some scholars place it somewhere about 566 B.C. He was given the best possible education under eight Brahmana scholars. This prepared him for the great work he was destined to do. He studied all the *Upanishads* but was still unsatisfied. He was caught by the spirit of the time and developed spiritual aspirations. He lived in youth a life of luxury. He was married to a lovely princess, Yashodhara and got a son, Rahula. But soon, he renounced his palace, wife and son. He began to wander in search of Truth. This renunciation is popularly explained by an episode in Gautama's life. He saw one day an old person, a sick person and a dead body. He suddenly realised the futility of human life, subject to old age, decay and death. But later on, in a discourse, Buddha tells that this decision was the result of a long meditation and not of a sudden fit of pessimism.

He continued his studies under the great teachers of the time but was not satisfied. He practised severe penance for six years, but the only result was the loss of physical strength. He was convinced that mere physical torture was of no avail. He began to meditate. Once when he was in deep meditation under a *Bodhi* tree near Gaya, he got enlightenment. Since then he is known as the Buddha (the Enlightened one).

Buddha went to Saranath near Banaras, which was a centre

of Brahmanism and started preaching. Soon he was able to win over many scholars who accepted the new doctrines and became his disciples. He led the life of a mendicant wandering from place to place and preaching his doctrine. He organised and established a new way of life which greatly appealed to the people. More than his preaching, his kindness, sympathy and affection for the poor attracted the people. He treated the rich and the poor alike. He often preferred the simple hospitality of the poor to that of the rich. Hinduism needed re-organisation and Buddha admirably served it. Thus he preached for about 45 years. He died by 486 B.C. at an advanced age of 80.

TEACHINGS:

The four noble truths (*Ariyasaccani*) are the essence of Buddha's *Dharma*:

1. Human beings experience misery and suffering (*Dukkha*).
2. *Trishna* or desire is the cause (*Samudaya*) of suffering.
3. Suffering can be avoided by controlling (*Nirodha*) desire.
4. Control of desire can be achieved by following the 8-fold path (*Magga*)—the practice of right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation.

Buddha stressed the importance of *sheela* (moral character), *samadhi* (concentration) and *prajna* (insight), for a successful spiritual life.

Buddhism believes in the theories of *Karma* and re-birth. Every individual has to suffer and repay for his action. *Nirvana* or *Moksha* can be achieved only by a life free from *trishna*.

The Buddhists questioned the authority of the *Vedas*. They do not believe in the existence of God. So do they deny the existence of Soul. However, scholars like S. Radhakrishnan and A. Coomaraswamy insist that Buddhism and Brahmanism form a single system of philosophy. Rituals and sacrifices were condemned. Buddha advocated a life of renunciation, piety, and upheld the principles of truth and non-violence. Pious, honest and truthful conduct paves the way, according to him, to *Nirvana*.

The teachings of Buddha are known as the "middle path"

since they avoid both the extremities of a thoughtless luxurious life and a cruel torture of penance. Buddha convinced the people that they can practise religion and attain *Nirvana* by living in society. Religion, he proved, is a social need. Men need not run away from society to practise religion. His new way of life was convincing as it did away with difficult rituals and costly sacrifices. He gave the principles of the *Upanishads* a new meaning. Hinduism was getting more and more ritualistic, formal and devoid of the real spirit. Buddha showed a new way of life through his interpretations, which removed the defects of Hindu religion and society.

Buddha thus taught the people not a new religion, but a new way of life. Buddhism was not regarded as a separate religion but a branch of Hinduism. People, therefore, did not hesitate to accept Buddhism. The Brahmanas took Buddha to be an *avatar* (incarnation) of God. Many Brahmana scholars became Buddha's disciples and enthusiastically preached the principles of Buddhism.

Hinduism was in a state of decadence on account of the caste system, sacrifice and rituals. People were dissatisfied with caste-distinctions. They were sick of the violence of the sacrifices. The priests dominated over the other classes because of the undue importance given to the rituals. All these were divorced from the spirit and philosophy of Hinduism. The philosophy of *Atman*, as contained and expounded in the *Upanishads* was too difficult for the ordinary man to understand. Nor was the ordinary man able to practise the severe type of penance to attain *Moksha*. The common man, therefore, felt that there was no spiritual life for him. Hinduism, thus needed a reorientation and reinterpretation and this was exactly what was given by Buddha. He thoroughly condemned sacrifices. He recommended no difficult rituals and no costly practices; hence no need of priests.

Buddha taught the people the importance of social life. The value of love, of abstinence and of truth was brought home to the people. The theory of *Atman*, was transformed into that of universal love. Social service, education and morality were given more importance than the study of theoretical principles. Simpli-

city of his teachings, the democratic conception of his religion and the emphasis on social life attracted the people to the Buddhistic fold.

Being one of the aristocratic family, Buddha was able to secure the support of many kings and rich merchants. They lavishly donated to the cause of Buddhism. At the same time, by his kindness and affection, Buddha drew the common people to his fold. He taught them, not in Sanskrit, but in their own Pali. He freely conversed with one and all, accepted the hospitality of the poor and cared more for the down-trodden and miserable individuals in society. "For who would willingly use harsh speech," asks Buddha, "to those who have done a sinful deed, strewing salt, as it were, upon the wound of their fault?" (Rurudeer *Jataka*). Buddha's personality was greatly responsible for the rise of Buddhism.

SANGHA:

Perhaps the most important feature of Buddhism is its rivival of the *Vedic Sangha* or the monastery. The monasteries have been the real backbone of Buddhism. They were centres of education, culture, social service and religion. The monks (*Bhikkhus*) were entirely devoted to the services of society. They had no family and no private property. They lived a life of rigorous discipline. They served the society in all possible ways. They declared:—

"I seek refuge in *Buddha*,
I seek refuge in *Dharma*,
I seek refuge in *Sangha*."

This expressed their complete dedication to the *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sangha*. The organisation and administration of the monasteries were on democratic lines. Everyone was treated with equality. There was free discussion and the decisions were taken in accordance with the views of the majority. Later on, nunneries also were established on similar lines.

The *Sangha* was a unique feature of Buddhism. It popularised religion. The ideals of the Buddha were practised and the people were benefitted by education and service. Learning was encouraged. The poor, the sick and the orphans found

shelter in the monasteries. The monks with no personal interests were respected by the people. The *Sangha*, in this way, infused among the people a new spirit and gained their confidence. It afforded material shelter, moral strength and spiritual solace. The contribution of the monks to the development of Buddhism cannot be exaggerated.

Under the patronage of Ashoka and Kanishka, Buddhism was raised to the status of a world religion. Literature, theology and philosophy were developed.

In this way, the religion spread rapidly far and wide, not only in India but also beyond India in countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Burma, Malaya and Indonesia. It brought about a religious and social revolution. It was accepted with zeal as it came when it was most needed.

COUNCILS :

Buddha did not write any book or leave anyone as his successor. He simply taught the people through his conversations and sermons. All these were properly arranged and commentaries were written in the four councils of Buddhist scholars held at different intervals.

The first Council was held at Rajgir, immediately after the death of Buddha. The *Tripitaka* — the three branches of Buddhistic sacred literature, — religious doctrines, monastic code and philosophical doctrines, was compiled. The teachings of Buddha were properly arranged and commentaries written.

The second council was held at Vaishali after about a century. Some monks at Vaishali had demanded the slackening of monastic rules. But they were condemned as heretics. The rules of monasteries were confirmed and the scriptures were revised.

The third council was convened under the patronage of Ashoka, under the presidentship of the great scholar, Tissa Moggaliputta, when discussions between Brahmanas and Buddhists were held to establish the superiority of Buddhism. This conference of Pataliputra is, therefore, of special significance. Ashoka raised Buddhism to the status of a world religion. Philosophical and theological basis was given by scholars like Upagupta and Tissa Moggaliputta.

Kanishka, another great emperor patronised the fourth council, and it witnessed the birth of a schism in Buddhism. Two schools of thought — *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* were created. Differences of opinion and views about rules of the monasteries, idol-worship, etc., existed since the very first council. But now there was a change in the fundamental principles of the religion. The new school was the *Mahayana* Buddhism and the older was *Hinayana*. *Mahayana* Buddhism and its differences from the old school can be briefly summed up thus:—

According to the old school, man should strive for his salvation by himself, without any reliance upon God. But the new school raised Buddha to the position of God (*Awalokiteshwara*) and his worship was advocated. Images of Buddha and other saints began to be worshipped. Worship and prayer took the place of self-culture and good deeds. The new school emphasised the salvation of all beings against the individual salvation of the *Hinayana* school. Sanskrit was adopted in place of Pali, as the religious language. New religious texts were written by the leading Buddhist scholars like Nagarjuna, Vasumitra and Ashvaghosha. There were also other points of difference between the two schools as regards metaphysical ideas, religious ideals and the very nature of Buddha. Henceforth Buddhism developed on somewhat similar lines as *Vedic* Hinduism. Worship of images, festivals, temples, ceremonies, etc., became common to both, thus bridging the gulf between them.

Buddhist Literature:

Sacred works of the Buddhists are found in Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Siamese, Chinese and Ceylonese languages. They were also translated into several other languages later on and influenced a vast majority of the people of the world. As such Buddhist literature richly deserves the epithet 'World Literature.'

The Pali canon, the oldest work, is divided into three 'baskets' — (1) *Vinaya-Pitaka*, (2) *Sutta-Pitaka* and (3) *Abhidhamma-Pitaka*. *Vinaya-Pitaka* contains three sections dealing with the rules and regulations of daily life, with special reference to the monks. Details of a monk's life are given with legends and

stories. They throw considerable light on the life of the period. *Sutta-Pitaka*, containing five *Nikayas* (sections) is the most important work. It contains the dialogues of Buddha, discourse on morality, the discussion of the origin of the universe and the four noble truths. The fifth part is significant. It includes *Dhammapada*, a section of 423 verses giving a fine exposition of Buddhistic ethics, some of the Buddha's actual sayings, and some old *Sutras* of his time. *Therigatha*, (the stories of nuns), and the *Jataka* stories are other parts of it. *Buddha-Vamsha* — a legend of 24 earlier Buddhas also is useful for the purposes of history. The third, *Abhidhamma Pitaka* deals with philosophy and metaphysics. Tissa Moggaliputta's section — *Kathavattu* is important. But scholars do not have a high opinion of this work so far as metaphysics is concerned.

Another work in Pali is *Milinda-Panho*, a collection of questions asked by Menander, the Bactrian King in India and answers given by the Buddhist scholar Nagasena. This is one of the highly valued works of the Buddhists.

Buddhaghosha, a Ceylonese scholar wrote *Vishuddhimagga*, a commentary on Buddhist philosophical doctrines and also other commentaries on all the *Tripitakas* including *Dhammapada* and *Jataka*. *Dipa Vamsha* and *Mahavamsha* are two other important Buddhist works dealing with the life and teachings of Buddha and the spread of Buddhism. These are considered as reliable sources of history.

The *Hinayana* literature, contains some works in Ardhamagadhi. Some of these are found in Tibetan and Chinese translations and some have been recently found in Central Asia. *Mahavastu* is a special work of this type dealing with the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

Mahayana school has a wealth of fine philosophical works in Sanskrit. *Lalita Vistara* is an epic of Buddha's life. *Vaipulya Sutras* have nine sections of which *Saddharmapundarika* and *Prajnaparamita* are important. Ashvaghosha of the Kushana period is perhaps the greatest exponent of the *Mahayana* philosophy. *Buddha-Charita*, *Sutralankara*, *Vajrasuchi*, *Mahayana Shraddhotpada* and *Saritputra Prakarana* are some of his works. Nagarjuna,

another great scholar of the South, wrote *Shatasaharika*, *Prajnaparamita* and *Madhyamika-Sutra* which are regarded as fundamentals of the *Mahayana* school. Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubhandhu, Dingnaga and Shantideva are some other famous scholars who wrote in Sanskrit.

The teachings of Buddha influenced the Tibetans, the Chinese and the Jews as well. The Bible owes a good deal to the teachings of Buddha, who derived much from the *Upanishads*.

DECLINE:

Buddhism originated in the 6th century B.C. and had a steady rise till the supremacy of the Guptas during the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. It is important to remember that Buddhism remained in India for about a thousand years and spread outside India also. It is still an important religion in India, though the number of its followers is quite small. Buddhism again is one of the major world-religions. The Gupta period was marked by a strong revival of Brahmanism and decline of Buddhism. The Hunas invaded India during the 5th century and destroyed Buddhist monasteries. Monasteries were the backbone of the religion and their destruction meant a death blow to Buddhism. Later on, Harshavardhana and the Palas of Bengal tried to revive Buddhism and it had once again a temporary rise.

The rapid decline and ultimate extinction of Buddhism are due to several reasons and circumstances. The loss of royal patronage, and the destruction of monasteries by foreign invasions are important causes. The internal dissensions among the Buddhist ranks destroyed their unity. The monks deviated from the path of duty and service. They lost the confidence of the people by their malpractices and unnecessary predominance. The growing number of monks was an economic burden on society. The spirit of Buddhism died and people became sick of monks. At the same time, there was an intensified effort, vigorously carried on by Brahmana scholars — Kumarilabhatta (700 A.D.) and Shankaracharya (788-820 A.D.) for the revival of Brahmanism. They succeeded in defeating the Buddhist scholars. Once again Hinduism rose to its glory and its supremacy was established.

The main reason for the disappearance of Buddhism was its absorption by Hinduism. The technique of organisation, importance of service and duty, significance of renunciation, futility of bloody sacrifices and several customs of the Buddhists have been incorporated in Hinduism. Hindus did not consider Buddhists as belonging to a different religion. In this way, the spirit of Buddhism was assimilated in Hinduism and only the organised part of Buddhism disappeared.

EARLY KINGDOMS AND REPUBLICS:

The history of the period from the 6th century B.C. to the 4th century B.C. is based on the Buddhist literature such as *Jatakas, Mahavastu* and the three *Pitakas*. The *Puranas* and other works agree with these to a considerable extent. Therefore the history of India begins from the 6th century B.C. on more solid grounds, making possible an acceptable chronological order, although several dates remain controversial.

The territory from the Kabul Valley to the Godavari was divided into a number of kingdoms and republics. The list from an early Buddhist text is as follows:

Anga, East Bihar
Ashmaka, on the Godavari
Avanti, part of Malwa
Chedi, modern Bundelkhand
Gandhara, Peshawar and Rawalpindi Districts
Kamboja, South-West of Kashmir
Kashi, Banaras
Koshala, Oudh
Kuru, Thaneswar, Delhi and Meerut Districts
Magadha, South Bihar
Malla, Gorakhapur District
Matsya, Jaipur
Panchala, Bareilly, Badaun and Farukabad Districts
Shurasena, Mathura
Vatsa, Allahabad region
Vriji (Vajji), North Bihar

Of these 16 *Janapadas*, two states Vajji and Malla were re-

publics or *Ganas* and the rest monarchies. In addition, there were a few more republics such as the Shakyas of Kapilavastu, Bulis of Allakappu, Kalamas of Kesaputta, Bhaggas of Sumsumara, Koliyas of Ramagama, Moriyas of Pipphalivana, Videhas of Mithila, etc. While the Vajjis were a confederation of eight clans and Mallas of two, the remaining seem to be separate clans. The outline of their political organisation is given in the Buddhist texts. Of the monarchical states four kingdoms — Avanti, Vatsa, Koshala and Magadha grew powerful, ultimately Magadha gaining supremacy over others. In spite of the mutual relations and alliances, these states were continuously at war among themselves.

Avanti with Ujjain as its capital was ruled by Pradyota Mahasena. He is credited with the bringing of some neighbouring states under his control. Udayana, King of Vatsa was of Bharata clan. He was imprisoned by Pradyota. Udayana managed to carry off Pradyota's daughter. He also had matrimonial relations with Magadha. He seems to have extended his authority over a wide area.

Koshala with its ancient capital Ayodhya roughly corresponded to modern Oudh. The kings of Koshala claimed direct descent from the divine dynasty of Shri Ramachandra of the *Ramayana*, which records the adventures of the Koshala princes into the Deccan upto the river Tungabhadra. The territory was greatly expanded by Prasenajit. The Shakyas and Kashis were included in the territory of Koshala. But the expansion of Koshala was checked by the rise of Magadha which continued to be a great power for a long time.

Magadha, one of the Asura kingdoms, was not easily Aryanised. Even by the end of the later *Vedic* period Magadhans were not considered as respectable Aryas. But this kingdom had some special advantages over others. A sort of natural defence was given by the hills surrounding the ancient capital, Girivraja. The fertile land, watered by the rivers such as the Ganga and the Shona, yielded rich harvests. Prosperity of the country increased by trade and commerce, facilitated by Ganga. The king had a number of elephants. With these Bimbisara of the Haryanka line was able to expand Magadha into a powerful and prosperous kingdom. Anga or east Bihar was annexed. Matrimonial alliances were entered into

with the rulers of Koshala and Vaishali (Lichchavis). Bimbisara's wife from Koshala brought him Kashi, and his relation with the Lichchavis helped upward expansion upto the foot of the Himalayas. Rajagriha, a new capital was built to the north of the old one. The strength of Magadha was stabilised by an efficient administration. Under the patronage of Bimbisara, Rajagriha soon became a centre of education, religion, culture and commerce. Bimbisara was a friend and follower of both Mahavira and Buddha who often visited and preached to him and his subjects. Thus the foundation of the glorious Magadhan Empire was laid by Bimbisara.

Ajatashatru, inspite of his noble name, killed his father Bimbisara and created enemies all around. Prasenjit of Koshala with the republican tribes around, decided to avenge the death of his brother-in-law. The Vajjis, together with the Mallas also prepared themselves for a war. But Ajatashatru was fortunate enough to have shrewd ministers. Pataligrama at the junction of Ganga and Shona was fortified and later on developed into Pataliputra. Vajjis were defeated and their territory annexed. Koshala was humbled and Kashi was retained.

Ajatashatru did not very much like Buddha who died early in his reign. Devadatta, a jealous and wicked cousin of Buddha was his special friend. Tradition asserts that Ajatashatru confessed his crime of his father's murder to Buddha who advised him to follow *Dharma*, thenceforth. However, Jainas and Buddhists were freely allowed, in his kingdom, to preach and organise *Sanghas*.

The history of Ajatashatru's weak successors is rather obscure and controversial. The *Puranas* do not agree with the Buddhist texts which in turn differ from the Ceylonese account. However, it is enough to note that the last ruler of this line was killed by an adventurer Mahapadma or Mahapadmapati by name who founded the dynasty of the Nandas.

Puranas tell us that although Mahapadma was low born he was a brave and able ruler. He extended the territory of Magadha and made it strong. Mahapadma was followed by eight rulers, the last Dhana Nanda, being a ruthless tyrant. He had a vast

treasury and a force of cavalry, chariots, elephants and infantry running into thousands. Pataliputra was a great centre of commerce and culture during this period. But the people were tired of the tyranny of the ruler. Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya dynasty killed the tyrant.

FOREIGN INVASIONS:

Cyrus (558 B.C. to 530 B.C.) founder of the Achaemenian empire of Persia invaded India by the middle of the 6th century B.C. He destroyed the City of Kapisha. The ruler of Gandhar requested the help of Magadha but could not secure it in time.

Darius (522 B.C. to 486 B.C.) an illustrious successor of Cyrus sent a naval expedition through the Sindhu. The Sindhu Valley and Rajputana were conquered and annexed to the Persian empire. They formed the largest and most profitable satrapies (provinces) of the Persian empire.

After Xerxes, the son of Darius, the hold of the Achaemenians on the Indian provinces was loosened. The Indian borderland was divided into small states with independent rulers. The Ashvakas ruled over Kabul; Gandhar was divided into kingdoms of Peshawar and Taxila. Porus or Purus was a powerful ruler of the Urasa dynasty ruling over the region between the Jhelum and Chenab. There was also a town — Nysa of Greek colonists. Several tribes like Sibi, Malava, Kshudrak established their small principalities. All of these were fighting among themselves. This was a favourable condition for foreign invaders and the advantage was taken of this by the great Macedonian warrior and conqueror — Alexander.

Young Alexander had the requisite courage and vigour. Having mastered the great Persian empire, he marched towards India by about 330 B.C. He had a huge and powerful army. The king of Taxila offered him help to avoid the destruction of his kingdom. Alexander defeated some rulers on the borderland. But he had a really formidable opponent in Porus of the Panjab. Porus collected a large army and fought valiantly. But his elephants were, somehow, frightened and created panic and

chaos in the army. The Greek army was superior in training and discipline and had better equipment. However, Porus, though defeated, behaved in a dignified way which impressed Alexander most. He restored the kingdom of Porus to him and continued further into the interior of India. But the resistance was both stronger and fiercer; his soldiers were unwilling to continue the campaign. So the great hero unwillingly returned. Before leaving the Indian territories, he appointed Greek Governors to look after them. But immediately after his death by about 323 B.C. all these territories were conquered back by Chandragupta Maurya.

These invasions had several effects on India. It came into closer contact with these Western countries. Not only Indian wealth, but Indian soldiers, artisans, architects and scholars were taken with them by Darius and Alexander. Several Greek and Persian colonies were established in India. Greeks and Persians settled in India as officers, soldiers, traders and artisans. Many of them got employment at the Indian courts. Intermingling of cultures produced new forms of script and architecture. Thus northern India was brought under a single administrative system, paving the way for the Mauryan empire. The expeditions and voyages that brought thousands of soldiers to India, opened new routes for communication and trade.

The Greeks were a highly cultured people. The Indians of this period claimed a rich heritage of literature and philosophy. Greek scholars learnt philosophy, religion, etc., from the Indians and the Indians in turn learnt Greek coinage, art, astronomy, etc. The fusion of cultures was the most welcome effect of the foreign invasions. Racial mixture, exchange of customs and manners, and permanent and frequent intercourse between these nations were the other effects.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION:

The states of this period can be broadly classified as Monarchies and Republics. The various types of monarchies of the later *Vedic* period continued to exist even now. Kingdoms

in Eastern India were *Samrajyas* ruled over by powerful kings, while the *Janapadas* in the Sindhu delta were somewhat limited monarchies with kings rigidly controlled by a Senate of Elders (*Sabha* or *Paura Sabha*). Several *rajas* carried on the administration with the assistance of the *Sabha* to which were admitted representatives of all *varnas*. The king had to be educated and trained so that he could govern well. Several instances of tyrants killed or expelled from the territory are found in Brahmana and Buddhist records. The over-throw of the Nandas is a classical example. Monarchy was generally hereditary but cases of election were current. Nor was it confined to Kshatriya *Varna* alone.

Annexation of foreign territories was not favoured. And in case of an inevitable annexation, governors were appointed by the King, usually from among the members of the royal family. *Purohita* and *Senapati* continued to be important as all other officers of the previous period. Perhaps the most important feature of the administrative system of this period is the rise of a class of senior officers — *Mahamatras*. They were in charge of different departments — *Sarvartha* (general affairs), *Vyavaharika* (justice), *Senanayaka* (army), *Rajjugrahaka* (land-survey), *Dronamapaka* (king's share of produce), etc. The system was elaborated and well-defined by Kautalya and the Maurya rulers.

The administration of justice and protection of the people from invaders were important royal functions. Armed forces in considerable strength fully equipped were maintained. Greek writers testify to the superior valour and organisation of the Indian armies. Elephants, a special feature of the Indian *Chaturanga Sena*, sadly let their masters down at crucial moments in several decisive battles. Several types of strategies and *Vyuha* (army arrangements) are mentioned in the Epics. Ajatashatru has the credit of having utilised a sort of mechanical catapult for throwing big stones.

Bali (tax) mentioned in the *Vedic* texts came to mean an oppressive tax, perhaps due to the method of collecting it. Collectors of *Bali* were described as man-eating demons. Usual revenue was a share in the crops which was measured by the king's official or the village headman. The king was known as

Shadbhagin or a sharer of the sixth part. Special payments were made on different occasions such as birth of a prince, coronation and marriage.

The working of the republics or *Ganarajyas* or *Sangha rajyas* is described in the Buddhist works which are in general agreement with the Greek sources. Republics were of different types. Some were just tribal organisations while many were governed by aristocratic chiefs or rajas. A few of them were independent while others were under this or that ruler. Lichchavis and Mallas were confederations of eight and two clans respectively. But the common feature of all these *Ganas* was that they were self-governing. Some were democratic and others were oligarchic, but all were republics. Each *gana* would decide its policy and elect the officials in a *parishad* (assembly) held in the Hall reserved for it (*Samsthagara*). Exact details of election and procedure of discussion are not known but there are references to voting and unanimous decisions. This central assembly was the sovereign body. *Mahallakas* or the members of this assembly, were greatly respected. Executive officers such as *Rajan*, *Ganarajan*, *Sanghamukhya* were elected by these members, usually from among themselves. *Rajan* was the common term for all chiefs. Some republics followed the system of appointing Rajas to executive posts by turn on the basis of seniority or family prestige. The chief executive, *Rajan* was assisted by *Uparajan* (Vice-consul), *Senapati* and *Bhandagarika* (treasurer). Administration of justice was well-organised with various boards for criminal and civil cases. Local government in the village was organised on similar lines, with an assembly and elected executive officers.

Economic Life:

Autonomous as a political unit, either under monarchy or *ganarajya*, the village was a self-sufficient unit in economic matters. The bulk of the population preferred the clean villages to the "dust covered towns." Agriculture continued to be important and a few rituals were added to systematise its various stages. Some villages allotted the land by dividing it into plots to the families and some villages followed the system of cultivation by

a whole clan. Co-operation in respect of irrigation, cattle, harvests, etc., was common. Slaves were few and were ordinarily employed as domestic servants. Large tanks were constructed for purposes of irrigation. "The village peasants were generally a contented lot, and both men and women had the civic spirit to work for the common good."

Raising of cattle was just natural to the agricultural people. *Ghosha* (cattle-ranch) was a common sight in every village. Pastures were free and belonged to the whole village. Cowboy was a respected person. Was not Lord Krishna himself a cow-boy? The head of the royal ranch was an important Officer.

All crafts and industries of the previous period such as those of the potter, carpenter, smith, tanner, etc., were well-developed. Stone and ivory work, and frescoe-painting seem to be popular among the rich. An important feature of the period is that the industries were more closely organised into guilds (*Shreni* or *Puga*) under the leadership of a *Pramukha* (foreman), *Jyeshthaka* (elder) or a *Shreshthin* (chief). Eighteen of the more important crafts were organised under such guilds. This resulted into a system of hereditary professions.

In the same way, tradesmen and merchants were united under a *Shreshthin* and a *Sarthavaha* (caravan leader). Overseas trade was carried on with Burma, Malaya, Ceylon and Babylon. Inland navigation was common and major rivers were trade-routes. Ports were developed, Bhrigukachcha (Broach), Surparaka (Sopara), Tamralipti (West Bengal) being more important. High-ways connecting cities and towns like Taxila, Rajgriha, Pataliputra, Champa, Varanasi, Saketa, Koushambi were in use. As travel was not safe, merchants travelled in caravans.

Silk, muslin, embroidery, ivory, jewellery and gold were the chief articles of trade. Copper and silver coins were common and gold coins were known. Barter was not completely given up.

SOCIETY:

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this period was the rise of "*Jati*" or caste system. While *Varnas* remained the broad groups in society, castes were formed within each *Varna*. Caste

or *Jati* is a system or group which is normally endogamous, commensal and craft-exclusive. The members belong to this exclusive group by birth, follow the same trade and normally live within the group, that is, marriage, food, drink, prayer, etc., with certain other groups are not allowed. Defining of the trades and professions in the later *Vedic* literature and the actual organization of the groups into guilds in the period are mainly responsible for the rise of *jati* system. Pali texts mention different villages of potters, hunters, Brahmanas, etc., and separate quarters in towns for different tradesmen. Separate living, hereditary professions and consequent development of local customs, manners, gods, etc., closely united the members of a single trade or profession. A feeling of common interests — corporate life developed and the *jati* or caste system was its result. Caste helped its members in their profession, provided security to orphans and widows, and was thus a bond of social solidarity. In spite of several invasions and upheavals, Hinduism has remained intact mainly because of the caste system. The spirit of common life was the basis of harmony among the castes. Only recently have rivalry and jealousy between the castes come up to bring the system into disrepute. Throughout the ancient period, however, complete harmony prevailed.

It had been declared that there was no distinction between castes. "Created equally by the Supreme Spirit, men had on account of their deeds been divided into various castes." Intercaste marriages were not approved but racial mixture and mixed population were accepted. Marriages between Hindus and Greeks, Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, Kshatriyas and Shudras, took place during the period. Professions likewise were changed although such a change was taboo. Defilement of caste was a constant dread to the Hindu, but it could be restored by means of sacred bath, performance of certain rituals and such other easy means. Ascetics and mystics were always free from the restrictions of caste.

Buddhist writers do not approve of the pride of birth; they state that character and not birth decides caste. While allowing some elasticity in restrictions about marriage, trade, food, etc., they regard Kshatriyas as of noble origin. Only learned Brah-

manas must be respected. Buddha proclaimed the fundamental equality of man but did not disturb the social order. The theory of *Karma* and rebirth requires varied orders in society. Thus "it is clear that social divisions and economic occupations did not exactly coincide, though the texts testify to a natural predilection of artisans and trades for the ancestral calling."

Custom and caste-restrictions were not the same all over the Indian sub-continent. Various factors — geographical, racial and economic were strong enough to create a wide diversity.

Joint families thrived and proved a better source of social security than the caste itself. Women enjoyed respect and freedom. Greek writers record that women fought side by side with men. Education was freely given to boys and girls. But the instability of the time, due to foreign invasions and wars, seems to have created anxiety in the minds of the authors of law-books. *Therigatha* or the saga of sisters — a Buddhist work, records several instances of helpless women molested or ill-treated. These and similar considerations seem to be responsible for restrictions on marriage and free movements. Still *Swayamvara* — free choice of her husband by the bride — was current even in a very late period. Higher education was not available to girls as it was difficult for them to go to the *Gurukalas* in the jungles. "Woman does not deserve freedom," said Manu but he also said, "Gods are pleased if women are worshipped; but if women are neglected, everything is futile." Women must be protected because their honour is valued most.

Dress, ornaments, and tastes in food became more refined. Cities like Champa, Rajgriha, Taxila, Kaushambi and Varanashi flourished. But the people showed their preference to rural area. Fine arts of music, singing, painting were popular as well as several games and sports among both men and women.

Religion:

Worship of gods and images became a common practice. Several new gods and goddesses were introduced as well as spirits dwelling in water, herbs, trees, etc. Sacrifices and rituals became more elaborate and technical, giving importance to the priestly

class. This also created doubts in the minds of thinking men. In fact in that age of inquiry, ideas of *Karma*, rebirth, religious ideas and spiritual speculations were widely discussed. Several schools of thought originated during this period. Wandering teachers began to preach new and revolutionary ideas. The authority of the *Vedas* was questioned and the superior claim of the priestly class was doubted. "*Charvakas*," "*Shunya-Vadins*," etc., began to shake the very foundations of religious and social structure. Pali texts mention 62 different sects while Jaina works refer to more than 300. Of such revolutionary schools of religion, Jainism and Buddhism are important. These were in no way new religions. K. A. Nilakantha Shastri sums up the relation of these two new orders with the *Vedic* religion as below:—

> "It is, however, easy to exaggerate the differences between Brahminism and the new creeds. There was indeed no absolute or violent breach of thought between the old order and the new, and the differences among rival creeds were fought out peacefully in public debates without any resort to force of arms. Even Brahmanical stories and legends had started the line of thought that a man should be judged not only by his birth, but by his character and action in society, and only those could place him above common humanity. And the ascetic and *Yogic* practices that had been systematised by the Brahmanical schools together with much else, like the doctrine of *Karma* were bodily taken over by the new systems. The two new creeds had so much in common and developed along such closely parallel lines that even the biographies of their founders tended to be assimilated, and modern scholars experienced no small difficulty in recognizing their separate personalities and doctrines. For some time it was believed that Jainism was a sect of Buddhism. The relations between Brahmanism and the new faiths were by no means friendly, but a certain devotion to ahimsa as part of Dharma was common to all of them, severe persecutions were rare and exceptional and the diminution in the numbers of Jains and the disappearance of Buddhism from India in the course of history were the result of the pacific triumphs of Hinduism over its rivals in dialectic argument and in popular appeal. Above all, it should be noted that Brahmanism had no organised church and no recognized hierarchy among its priests whose influence was due to their knowledge, character and capacity to serve the state and society."

Thus the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth, conduct and *Dharma* were common to all the three — Buddhists, Jains and Brahmanas.

While the *Varnas* and the caste system were not fully and equally approved by them, the Jainas and the Buddhists recognised the social division with learned Brahmanas and Kshatriyas at the top. *Sangha* (= organised church), denial of God, absence of rituals, accent on suffering and abstinence, questioning the authority of the *Vedas*, immortality of the soul, are some of the points of difference.

Cults of Vishnu and Shiva which later appeared in the Hindu society and which were taken to have caused a schism, did not alter the theological basis of Brahmanism. Most of the Hindus even today worship both Vishnu and Shiva and the "divine" rivalry which was but a creation of small minds, never grew beyond small groups.

SUMMARY

JAINISM:

There were 23 *Tirthankaras* or Prophets before Mahavira who was the 24th. No historical material is available about the first 22 *Tirthankaras.* The 23rd *Tirthankara* seems to have been a historical figure. He was Parshwanath, the son of King Ashvasena of Varanashi. He lived 250 years before Mahavira and preached the basic principles of Jainism. His main teachings were: (1) To avoid injury to life; (2) To be truthful; (3) Not to steal, and (4) Not to possess any property.

Vardhamana was the son of a Kshatriya chief of Kundagram in Vaishali. He left the palace and practised severe penance. He attained supreme knowledge (*Kevala Jnana*). Since he controlled and conquered the *Indriyas* (senses), he is known as *Mahavira* or *Jina* (conqueror). His disciples are known as *Jainas* or *Nirgranthas* (free from fetters).

Mahavira taught the four teachings of Parshwanath to which he added a fifth — the practice of chastity. He also emphasised the *Triratna* (three jewels) — (a) right knowledge, (b) right vision, (c) right conduct. The unity and universality of life was stressed and the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-injury) was carried to the extreme. Jainism denies the existence of God. Everyone must pay for his sins by rebirth and suffering.

Jaina scholars have contributed to the religious and secular literature as well. Philosophy, Mathematics, Poetry and sciences were all studied by them. The number of Jainas is not big but they are a powerful community in India, even to-day.

Jaina Literature:

The main branches of Jaina Literature are:—

12 *Angas*, containing the principles of Jainism, rules of discipline for monks, refutation of heretic doctrines, stories of monks and their disciples, and other miscellaneous doctrines.

12 *Upangas*, attached to every *Anga*, are mostly dogmatic and mythological in nature.

10 *Prakirnas* are verses dealing with various subjeots connected with Jaina doctrines.

6 *Chheda Sutras* contain disciplinary rules for monks and nuns and also legends to illustrate them.

4 *Mulasutras* are mostly parables, maxims, dialogues in verse.

4 miscellaneous texts dealing with various topics and cyclopaedic in nature form the last group. *Nandisutra* and *Anuogadara* are famous.

BUDDHISM:

Teachings:

The four noble truths (*Ariyasaccani*) are the essence of Buddha's *Dharma:*

(1) Life is full of misery and suffering (*Dukkha*). (2) Trishna (desire) is the cause (*Samudaya*) of suffering. (3) Suffering can be avoided by controlling (*Nirodha*) desire. (4) Eradication of desire can be achieved by following the 8 fold path (*Magga*), the practice of right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation.

Buddha also stressed the importance of *Sheela* (moral character), *Samadhi* (concentration) and *Prajna* (insight), for a successful spiritual life.

Buddhism believes in the theories of *Karma* and re-birth. Every individual has to suffer and repay for his action. *Nirvana* or *Moksha* can be achieved only by a life without *trishna*.

Buddha thus taught the people not a new religion, but a new way of life. Buddhism was not regarded as a separate religion but a branch of Hinduism. People, therefore, did not hesitate to accept Buddhism. The *Brahmanas* took Buddha to be an *avatar* (incarnation) of God. Many *Brahmana* scholars became Buddha's disciples and enthusiastically preached the principles of Buddhism.

Perhaps the most important feature of Buddhism is its revival of the *Vedic Sangha* or the monastery. The monasteries have been the real backbone of Buddhism. They were the centres of education, culture, social service and religion. The monks (*Bhikkhus*) were people who were devoted to the services of society. They had no family and no private property. They lived a life or rigorous discipline. They were comparable to the *Vedic sanyasis* and served their society in all possible ways.

Under the patronage of Ashoka and Kanishka, Buddhism was raised to the status of a world religion. Literature, theology and philosophy were all developed. The organisation of religion was strengthened.

BUDDHIST LITERATURE:

The Pali canon, the oldest work, is divided into three 'baskets'— (1) *Vinaya-Pitaka*, (2) *Sutta-Pitaka*, and (3) *Abhidhamma-Pitaka*. *Vinaya-Pitaka* has three sections dealing with the rules and regulations of daily life, with special reference to the monks. Details of a monk's life are given with legends and stories. They throw considerable light on the conditions of the period. *Sutta-Pitaka*, with five *Nikayas* (sections) is the most important work. It includes the dialogues of Buddha, discourse on morality, the discussion of the origin of the Universe and the four noble truths. The fifth part is of special significance as it contains many sections such as *Dhammapada*, a section of 423 verses giving a fine exposition of Bhuddhistic ethics, some of Buddha's actual sayings, and some old *Sutras* of his time. It also contains *Therigatha*, (the stories of nuns), and *Jataka* stories. The third *Abhidhamma Pitaka* deals with philosophy and metaphysics.

Another work in Pali is the *Milinda-Panho*, a collection of questions by Menander, the Bactrian King with answers given by the Buddhist Pundit Nagasena.

Dipavamsha and *Mahavamsha* are two other Buddhist works dealing with the life and teachings of Buddha and the spread of Buddhism. These are reliable sources of history.

Mahayana school has a wealth of fine philosophical works in Sanskrit. *Lalitavistara* is an epic of Buddha's life. *Vaipulya Sutras* have nine sections of which *Saddharmapundarika* and *Prajnaparamita* are important.

DECLINE:

The main reason for the disappearance of Buddhism from India was its absorption by Hinduism. The technique of organization, importance of service and duty, significance of renunciation, futility of bloody sacrifices and several customs and manners of the Buddhists have been accepted by the Hindus, who did not consider Buddhists as belonging to a different religion.

EARLY KINGDOMS AND REPUBLICS:

Of 16 *Janapadas* mentioned in the Buddhist texts, two states Vriji and Malla were republics (*Ganas*) and the rest were monarchies. In addition to Vriji and Malla there were a few more republics such as the Shakyas of Kapilavastu, Bulis of Allakappu, Kalamas of Kesaputta, Bhaggas of Samsumara, Koliyas of Ramagama, Moriyas of Pipphalivana, Videhas of Mithila,

etc. While the Vajjis were a confederation of 8 clans and Mallas of 2, the remaining seem to be separate clans. The Vajjis are known as Lichchavis and were more important. The outline of their political organisation is given in the Buddhist texts but not the regular history. Of the monarchical states, 4 kingdoms — Avanti, Vatsa, Koshala and Magadha grew powerful, ultimately Magadha gaining supremacy over others. In spite of the mutual relations and alliances, these states were continuously at war among themselves.

FOREIGN INVASIONS:

Invasions of India by foreigners, brought India into closer contact with the Western countries. Indian wealth, Indian soldiers, artisans, architects and scholars were taken away with them by Darius and Alexander. Several Greek and Persian colonies were established in India. Greeks and Persians settled in India as officers, soldiers, traders and artisans. Many of them got employment at Indian courts. The conflict of cultures produced new forms of script and architecture, and northern India was brought under a single administrative system, thus paving the way for the Mauryan empire. These expeditions and voyages that brought thousands of soldiers to India, opened new routes for communication and trade.

The Greeks were a cultured people. The Indians too claimed a rich heritage of literature and philosophy. Greek scholars learnt philosophy, religion, etc., from the Indians and the Indians in turn learnt Greek coinage, art, astronomy, etc. The fusion of cultures was the most important effect of foreign invasions. Racial mixture, exchange of customs and manners, and frequent intercourse between these nations were the other effects.

CIVILIZATION:

Political Organization:

Kingdoms in Eastern India were *Samrajyas* ruled over by powerful kings, while the *Janapadas* in the Sindhu delta were somewhat limited monarchies with kings rigidly controlled by a Senate of Elders (*Sabha or Paurasabha*). Several *rajas* governed with the assistance of the Sabha to which were admitted representatives of all *varnas*. Several instances of tyrants killed or expelled from the territory are found in the writings of Brahmanas and Buddhists.

An outstanding feature of the administrative system of this period is the rise of senior officers — *Mahamatras*. They were in charge of different departments — *Sarvartha* (general affairs), *Vyavaharika* (justice), *Senanayaka* (army affairs), *Rajjugrahaka* (land-survey), *Dronamapaka* (king's share of produce), etc.

Usual revenue was a share in the crops which was measured by the king's official or the village headman. The king was known as *Shadbhagin* or a sharer of the sixth part. Special levies on different occasions such as birth of a prince, coronation, marriage, etc. were imposed to meet the expenses.

Republics were of different types. Some were just tribal organisations while some were governed by aristocratic chiefs or *rajas*. A few of them were independent while others were under the influence of this or that kingdom. Lichchavis and Mallas were confederations of 8 and 2 clans respectively. But the common feature of all these *Ganas* was that they were self-governing republics. Some were democratic and others were oligarchic, but all were republics. Each *gana* would decide its policy and elect the officials in a *parishad* (assembly) held in the Hall reserved for it (*Samsthagara*). Exact details of election and procedure of discussion are not known but there are references to voting and unanimous decisions. This central assembly was the sovereign body.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

Agriculture continued to be important and some rituals were added to systematise its various stages. Some villages allotted the land by dividing into plots to the families and others followed the system of cultivation by a whole clan. Co-operation in respect of irrigation, cattle, harvests etc. was a common feature.

Raising of cattle was just natural to the agricultural people. *Ghosha*, cattle-ranch, was a common sight in every village. Pastures were free and belonged to the whole village. Cowboy was a respected person.

All the crafts of the previous period such as pottery, carpentry, smithy, tannery, etc. were well-developed. Stone and ivory work, and frescoe-painting seem to be popular among the rich. An important feature of the period is that the industries were more closely organised into guilds (*Shreni* or *Puga*) under the leadership of a *Pramukha* (foreman), *Jyeshthaka* (elder) or a *Shreshthin* (chief). Eighteen of the more important crafts were organised under guilds.

In the same way, tradesmen and merchants were also united under a Shreshthin and a *Sarthavaha* (caravan leader). Sea-trade was carried on with Burma, Malaya, Ceylon and Babylon. River navigation was common and all major rivers were important trade-routes. Ports were developed, Bhrigukachcha (Broach), Shurparak (Sopara), Tamralipti (West Bengal) being more important. High-ways linked important cities like Taxila, Rajgriha, Pataliputra, Champa, Varanashi, Saketa, Kaushambi. But travel was not safe and merchants travelled in caravans.

SOCIETY:

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this period was the rise of '*Jati*' or caste system. While *Varnas* remained the broad groups in society, castes

were formed within each *Varna*. Caste or *Jati* is a system or group which is normally endogamous, commensal and craft-exclusive. The members belong to this exclusive group by birth, follow the same trade and normally live within the group, that is, marriage, food, drink, prayer, etc., with certain other groups are not allowed.· Defining of professions in the later *Vedic* period and the actual organization of the groups into guilds, are mainly responsible for the rise of the caste system.

A feeling of common interests — corporate life developed and the *jati* or caste system was its result. Caste helped its members in their profession, provided security to orphans and widows, and was thus a bond of social solidarity. In spite of several foreign invasions and political upheavals, Hinduism remained in tact mainly because of the caste system.

It is also to be noted that custom, manners or even caste-restrictions were not the same all over the Indian sub-continent. Geographical, racial and economic factors were strong enough to create a wide diversity of customs.

Joint families thrived and proved a better source of social security than the caste itself. Women enjoyed respect and freedom. Greek writers record that women fought side by side with men. Education was freely given to boys and girls.

Dress, ornaments, and tastes in food became more refined. Cities like Champa, Rajgriha, Taxila, Kaushambi and Varanashi flourished. But the people showed their preference to rural area. Fine arts of music, singing, painting were popular. Men and women indulged in many indoor games and sports.

RELIGION:

Worship of gods and images became a common practice. Several new gods and goddesses were introduced. Spirits dwelling in water, herbs, trees, came to be worshipped. Sacrifices and rituals assumed more elaborate and technical form giving undue importance to the priestly class.

The ideas of *Karma* and rebirth, religious ideas and spiritual speculations were widely talked about. Several schools of thought originated during this period. Wandering teachers began to preach new and revolutionary ideas.

Thus the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth, conduct and *Dharma* were common to all three — Buddhists, Jainas and *Brahmanas*. While the *Varnas* and the caste system were not fully and equally approved by them, the Jainas and the Buddhists recognised the social division with learned *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas* at the top. *Sangha* (= organised church), denial of God, absence of rituals, accent on suffering and abstinence, questioning the authority of the *Vedas*, immortality of the soul, are some of the points of difference.

Cults of Vishnu and Shiva which later appeared in the Hindu society and which were taken to have caused a schism, did not alter the theological basis of *Brahmanism*. Most of the Hindus even today worship both Vishnu and Shiva and the divine rivalry which was but a creation of small minds, never grew beyond small groups.

5

MAURYAN EMPIRE

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA — CHANAKYA AND MEGASTHENES — BINDUSARA — ASHOKA — MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION — CIVILIZATION — KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA (321-298 B.C.)

CHANDRAGUPTA Maurya was the son of Mura — a lady connected with the royal Nanda family. Some historians believe that the Mauryans belong to a Himalayan tribe. The most accepted view is that Chandragupta was related to the royal family of the Nandas but he had no claim to the throne. He was a capable, ambitious and adventurous young man. With the help and guidance of Chanakya, he collected a large army and defeated the Greeks who had acquired some portion of North India. Alexander's death and subsequent confusion in Greek circles were favourable for Chandragupta Maurya. Encouraged by this success, he attacked and deposed the last Nanda king and ascented the throne of Magadha by 322 B.C.

Chandragupta thus secured the mastery over a powerful kingdom with rich resources. Soon, he organised a huge and disciplined army, a stable and systematic government and began a campaign of conquests. The details of his conquests are not known but it is

beyond doubt that he subdued, one after another, all the states in Northern India. He is said to have invaded South India and established his sway there. His empire extended from the Himalayas to the Tamil country in the South, from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. It is doubtful whether he directly exercised his authority over the territories south of the Narmada as he did over those in the north. It is clear that he ruled the whole of North India as a single administrative system and thus brought about political unity for the first time.

Seleucus Nikator, one of the ablest Greeks in Asia, invaded India by about 305 B.C. He was one of the Generals of Alexander, and wanted to reconquer the Indian territories. But circumstances were greatly changed. India was now ruled by a powerful military leader, Chandragupta Maurya. The Mauryan army was quite efficient and met successfully the Greek army. Seleucus was severely defeated and surrendered the rich Satrapies of Herat, Kandahar, Makran and Kabul. Chandragupta, however, behaved generously towards the Greek potentate. He made a present of 500 war elephants to Seleucus. He also married the daughter of Seleucus. Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, lived at the court of Chandragupta. His book, *Indica*, though now available in fragments, contains useful historical material. Chandragupta had established diplomatic relations with the Western powers.

Chanakya's *Arthashastra* gives an outline of the administrative system. The ministers, civil service, spy system and the council for the administration of Pataliputra are the chief characteristics of the system. Distant provinces were governed by Kumaras — governors belonging to the royal family. An efficient system of judiciary and public works prove the benevolent activities of the emperor.

According to the Jaina tradition, Chandragupta professed Jainism, abdicated the throne by 298 B.C. and went with other Jaina monks to the South, where he died. Chandragupta encouraged Jainism, patronised learning and was devoted to the service of his subjects. He even neglected his personal comforts to hear the grievances of his subjects. His daily life was so arranged, that he hardly neglected any administrative matter. He was a man of strong

character and inexhaustible energy. Yet he was just and kind. His achievements stand testimony to his greatness. Chandragupta won the independence of India by reconquering the territories lost to the Greeks. He defeated the Nandas and established a vast empire. He stopped the Greek invader Seleucus and extended his territories. He built a very stable governmental machinery and maintained diplomatic relations with foreign kings. His policy of public works and welfare activities proves his devotion towards the happiness of his subjects. In this way, Chandragupta is a real National Emperor and occupies an important place in Indian History.

CHANAKYA AND MEGASTHENES:

Chanakya was the friend and teacher of Chandragupta Maurya. He was known by three names — Vishnugupta, Chanakya and Kautalya. A great scholar and a shrewed statesman, Chanakya trained Chandragupta Maurya, helped him to overthrow the Nandas and guided him in his administration. The Mauryan empire and the administrative system are in a way the creations of Chanakya. Tradition has it that Chanakya was once insulted by a Nanda king and therefore he caused the destruction of the whole dynasty. "The splendid success of Chandragupta was due, as much to the statesmanship of the clever prime minister as to his own military genius" (Dr. Majumdar).

Kautalya's *Arthashastra* is a great treatise on political theory and practice. It discusses the scope of the state, inter-state relations and the principles of governmental organisations. We get here an outline of the Mauryan administration. Historically speaking, the book indicates the development of political science and practice in India since the *Vedic* age.

The king was accepted by the people to put a stop to their suffering from anarchy — (*Matsya Nyaya*). Chanakya says that the king is the supreme authority on earth and his power must be exercised for the welfare of his subjects. "The king must find his happiness in the happiness of his subjects." The *Arthashastra* stresses the duties and responsibilities of the king and gives even his time-table. All the seven limbs of the state — the king, minister, country, fort,

treasury, army and the friend, are elaborately discussed in it. The functions of the state include security of life and property, administration of justice, economic control, social stability and moral and spiritual progress. Kautalya gives in detail the administrative arrangements for the capital, districts or provinces, various taxes, ministers, their duties, the civil servants, spy system and judicial administration. Undoubtedly the *Arthashastra* is a monumental work embodying the ancient political wisdom and experience.

Part of the advice given by Chanakya is said to be deviating from the traditional sense of morality and honesty. He advises cunning and shrewd methods against hostile and rival kings. But as regards the duties and responsibilities of the king and administrative arrangements, Chanakya sets up a high ideal.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, for five years, had opportunities to observe the people and society closely. His impressions and observations were recorded in "*Indica*," now available only in fragments. Even these fragments reveal a good deal of Indian life and therefore are of great historical importance. However, it is to be noted that Megasthenes was in India for a brief while and that too in the court. His findings may not always be accurate.

Megasthenes refers to the various races of India. He mentions the ancient relations between India and Greece, as also a few similarities in their legends, customs and beliefs. The great hero Hercules was an Indian monarch and his daughter a queen of the Pandyas of the South, according to the Greek legend.

Megasthenes tells us about the seven classes of the society — philosophers, husbandmen, shepherds, artisans, military, superintendents, and the councillors. Their duties and relative status are described by him.

About the people, there are many interesting remarks. Indians were generally tall and proud-bearing. Camels, horses and elephants were used for transport, and travel. Chariot-race was both a pastime and a test of proficiency. The people were quite good at hunting and fighting and more so at cultivation. On the whole they were law-abiding. They never drank except at sacrifices. Truth and honesty were greatly esteemed. People never locked and guarded

their property. Megasthenes says there were no slaves in India. But this is not quite correct.

Megasthenes points out that the ideas of the Greeks and the Indians on several metaphysical questions were similar. Indians often discussed death and prepared themselves to meet it. Philosophy was also discussed and he was reminded of Plato. Yogic practices were in vogue.

Indians knew several sciences and medicine was one of them. Diseases were treated by diet. Ointments and plasters also were known to them.

BINDUSARA (298-273 B.C.) :

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son, Bindusara, known to the Greeks as *Amitraghata* or Slayer of foes. There were during his long rule few troubles in the vast empire which he inherited. There was a serious challenge to his authority in the Deccan. He had to reconquer the entire region. Taxila, the out-lying district also revolted and Prince Ashoka was sent with a large force to suppress it. But the people of Taxila had nothing against the emperor or the prince. They were oppressed by ruthless officers. The guilty officers were removed and Ashoka was appointed as governor of Taxila. Bindusara was able to maintain the vast empire of Chandragupta in tact. Bindusara left behind him a number of sons and daughters. Therefore a war of succession was started. According to an unreliable tradition Ashoka killed his elder brother and also the other ninetynine brothers. The purpose of this story seems to show that Ashoka, before accepting Buddhism, was a cruel tyrant and the merciful sect made him the kindest ruler. However, it seems that a dispute about the throne was the main reason for the delay in the formal coronation of Ashoka which took place nearly four years after Bindusara's death.

ASHOKA (273-233 B.C.) :

Having served as governor at Taxila and Ujjain, Ashoka had gained valuable experience under his father. Both the places were

world-renowned for learning and cultural attainments. Ashoka must have come into contact with the great scholars and learned men of the places.

For the first few years of his reign, Ashoka was busy maintaining peace and order over the vast empire he had inherited. In 259 B.C. he undertook what is known as the Kalinga campaign and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. The huge destruction of human life caused by this war changed Ashoka's life completely. His renunciation of killing and fighting is reflected in his edicts. Rock Edict XIII has a reference to the Kalinga Campaign:

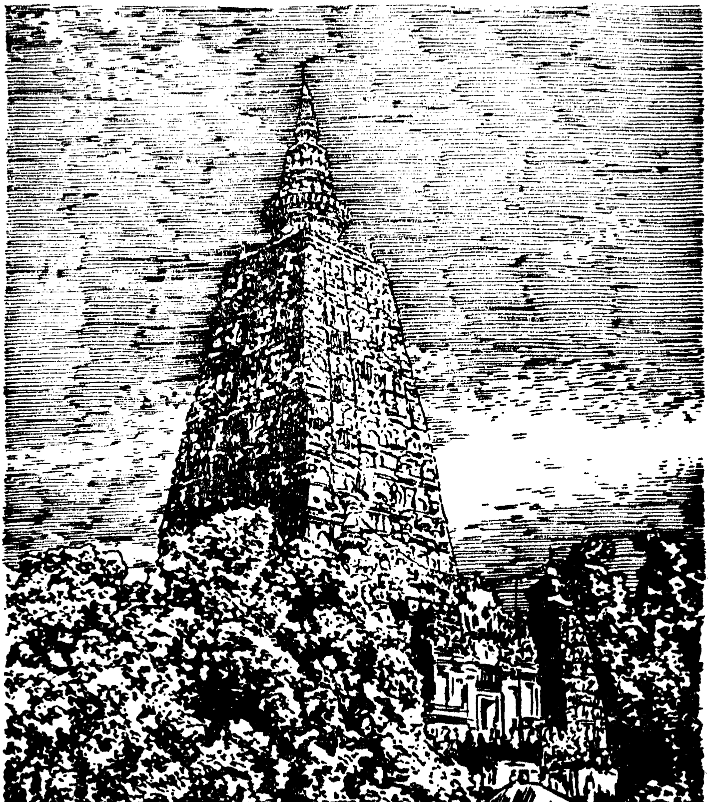
> "....my sons and grandsons who will hear about my conquests should not consider that further conquest is to be undertaken.... They should consider that the only true conquest is the conquest of *Dharma.*"

In another place, Kalinga Edict II, Ashoka declared that

> "....all people are my children. Just as I desire on behalf of my own children, that they should be fully provided with all kinds of comfort and enjoyment in this world, as well as in the other world, similarly, I desire the same (happiness and enjoyment in this world and the next) on behalf of all people."

This is really a unique decision in history. Kings usually are intoxicated by their victories but Ashoka's eyes were opened and he decided to pursue the path of love and non-violence. His ideal of kingship began to be realised. He devoted himself to the moral and religious welfare of his subjects.

For two years, Ashoka studied the teachings of Buddha under Upagupta, the greatest Buddhist scholar of the time. Then he visited the holy places of the Buddhists. He took Upagupta with him to preach Buddhism. With a view to guiding his subjects in the proper way of life, he declared his famous law of piety or *Dharma* — a code of ethics. It prescribes some simple duties like obedience to parents and teachers, proper treatment of Brahmanas and *Shramanas*, kindness to the poor and servants, non-injury to animals, toleration of other religious beliefs, charity, truthfulness, purity of conduct, etc. He appointed special officers — *Dharma Mahamatras*



Bodh Gaya
In memory of Enlightenment

whose duties were to preach religious and moral codes, to look after and to help efficient functioning of monasteries, to patronise scholars, and to punish those who deviated from the path of religion. His whole administration was based on the principles of love and friendliness. Thus Ashoka applied the principles of *Dharma* to state-administration.

Ashoka sent missions to Burma, Ceylon, Nepal and Greece to expound and popularise Buddhism.

> "The missions of King Ashoka are amongst the greatest civilising influences in world's history; for they entered countries for the most part barbarous and full of superstition, and amongst these animistic peoples Buddhistic principles spread as a wholesome leaven.
>
> "The history of Ceylon and Burma, as of Siam, Japan and Tibet may be said to begin with the entrance into them of Buddhism: and in these lands it spread far more rapidly and made a far deeper impression than in China with its already ancient civilization. As Christianity spread very rapidly amongst the animistic peoples of Africa and the South Sea islands, exerting a strong influence and replacing superstition and chaos by a reasoning belief in One God and an orderly universe; so Buddhism in these eastern lands had exerted a beneficent influence by putting *karma*, the law of cause and effect, in the place of caprice of demons and tribal gods, and a lofty system of morals in the place of tribal custom and taboo.
>
> "The Buddhist missionaries, moreover, brought with them much of the culture of their own land. It seems clear, for instance, that it was Mahindra who brought into Ceylon the arts of stone carving and of irrigation which his father had so successfully practised in India: and the Ceylon Buddhist of to-day thinks of his religion as the force to which his country owes the greatness of her past history.... Not far from the ruined city of Anuradhapura a lovely rocky hill rises out of a dense sea of jungle, and here is the rock-hewn 'study' and the tomb of the great and gentle prince Mahindra who about 250 B.C. brought Buddhism to Ceylon." — K. J. Saunders: *The Story of Buddhism*, pp. 76-79.)

This is of special importance, in view of the fact that Buddhism spread rapidly in those and other countries and survived there while it declined in India.

A great assembly of Buddhist monks and scholars was convened by Ashoka. It was guided by Tissa Moggaliputta. The conference was successful in securing for it the sympathy and support of several noblemen.

HIGH IDEAL OF KINGLY DUTY

His keen interest in the welfare of his subjects may be easily seen by a reference to Ashoka's benevolent activities. He prohibited the slaughter of animals. He opened hospitals for men and for animals also. Food, medicine, clothing and shelter were given free in these hospitals. He constructed roads and built several rest-houses on them. Travel and commerce became safe and comfortable. He looked after the poor, the orphans, the sick, the widows and helpless ones. Social security was accepted as the responsibility of the state.

Ashoka was a great ruler of noble character. He was imbued with a love of humanity and he had the greatest regard for truth and the sanctity of life. He had a very high ideal of his kingly duty. He considered himself as a devoted father of his subjects. He was accessible to one and all, at all hours of the day and night. He led a simple life and thus set an example of renunciation. He strove not only for material welfare, but also for moral and religious uplifment of his subjects. He ruled as an ideal king for about 40 years and gained a unique place in the history of mankind.

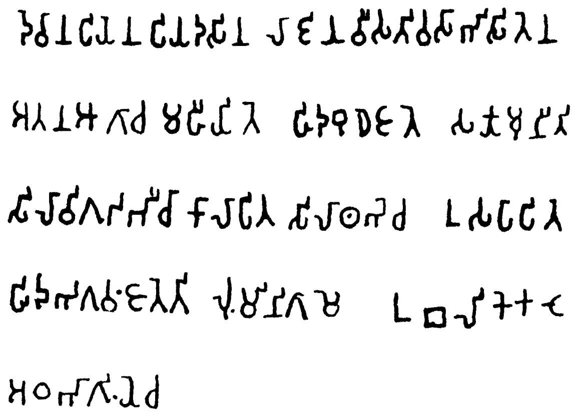
EDICTS:

Ashoka upheld the ideal of moral welfare. He propagated the law of piety or *Dharma* in a simple code of behaviour. An edict of his declares:

> "Happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience, and great fear of sin and great energy."

He caused these principles of conduct to be engraved on stone pillars and rocks so that people could read them and follow them. They were written in simple language and often in the regional script. These are known as *edicts* and they are considered as a valuable and reliable source of information about the people and official administration of the period.

The edicts are scattered over a very wide area, at the frontiers of the Mauryan empire. There are references to the several officers and their duties. This gives us an idea of the administrative system.



ASHOKA'S INSCRIPTION
Lumbini Garden

Contemporary rulers in India and outside are mentioned. By this we are able to fix the dates of Mauryan period. Ashoka had maintained close contact with foreign rulers.

Religious and cultural aspects of this age are known from these edicts. Buddhism was patronised and was almost the royal religion. Yet Ashoka advised the people to respect Brahmanas and *Shramanas*. Monasteries, stupas and pillars were built.

In this way, the edicts of Ashoka speak eloquently about the political, religious and cultural conditions of the period. They help in fixing dates and in understanding the great Emperor Ashoka better.

MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION:

The Mauryan administrative system is important in several ways. It was the first to have all the features of a good government. It excellently suited the vast empire which extended almost all over India. The king was devoted to the welfare of the people and the principles of good conduct were applied to the state. The governmental organisation was efficient and therefore order and stability were achieved. It was possible to consolidate the progress in culture

and make new contributions to it. The same form of administration in all its essentials has survived up to the modern time with few modifications.

The king was the supreme head of the state. The *Arthashastra* emphasizes the sovereignty of the monarch but insists that he must be benevolent. The king was the law-giver, the supreme judge, the commander of the army and the chief executive. He was trained to fulfil these responsibilities. He followed a definite time-schedule which spread the kingly duties throughout the day. He gave audience to the aggrieved subjects and supervised every department of government by turn.

The distant provinces were administered through the viceroys known as *Uparajas* or *Kumaras*. They were usually selected from among the members of the royal family. Though they acted on instructions, it seems that they had the power of taking decisions in cases of emergency. Taxila, Ujjain, Suvarnagiri and Tosali were some important seats of the viceroys.

The central part of the empire was directly administered by the king with the help of a council of ministers and civil servants. *Mantri*, *Purohita*, *Senapati* and *Yuvaraja* formed the cabinet. There were ministers for different departments like treasury, public works, judicial administration and religious affairs. All the ministers reported to the king every day and received his directions on important matters of policy. They executed their duties through several departments that worked with a chain of officers. The chief officer of a department was known as *Mahamatra*. *Amatyas* served on the advisory body and also as subordinate ministers. They correspond to the modern civil service and were specially trained for administrative purposes. All higher and important executive, judicial and diplomatic posts were held by *Amatyas*.

The provinces were governed by *Antapalas* and *Durgapalas*. The districts were under the *Rajukas* who were entrusted with land survey and agriculture. *Pradeshikas* looked after collection revenue, peace and order of the districts. The towns were in charge of *Nagaraka* while the *Gramani* was the head of the village. *Sthanikas* were in charge of groups of towns and *Gopas* in charge of groups of villages. They had to maintain records of lands, births, deaths,

occupations and foreigners. The administration of villages was carried on by the local assembly.

In this way, even in outline, the Mauryan system of administration is startingly modern. The wide scope of functions of the state is revealed by the number of departments mentioned by Chanakya. Almost all aspects of life were looked after by the state. Of special importance and interest were the *Mahamatras* in charge of the department of *Dharma.* They were to see that the law of piety was promoted. They saw to it that people maintained a certain standard of moral behaviour. They were instructed to look after the poor, the orphans, the widows and the unemployed. Social security measures were adopted to minimise the sufferings of the less fortunate people. The officers in charge of public works were important. There were officers for inspection of commerce, arts, crafts and roads.

The administration of Pataliputra, the capital, was a separate unit. The city was nine miles long and a mile and a half broad. It was surrounded by a wooden wall with a number of towers and 64 gates. This great city was a centre of learning, commerce and religion. A body of 30 commissioners looked after it. They formed six committees of five each and supervised the various departments. The first one controlled industries and handicrafts. The second was in charge of foreigners and gave them all facilities. Births and deaths were recorded by the third committee. Commerce was controlled by the fourth. Sale of manufactured goods was supervised by the fifth, and the sixth was in charge of taxes.

The revenue of the state was from taxes on land, commerce, tolls and sundry items. Land-tax was the chief source of income. One fourth of the produce was collected at the time of harvest. Agriculture received special attention. Lakes, canals, wells and reservoirs were constructed. Agriculturists were considered as a sacred class and fisheries and forest industries were encouraged. Roads, rest-houses and bridges were built. The Sudarshana lake at Girnar was constructed during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. Patronage of religion and scholarship, charity and social security measures were other important items of state-expenditure.

The administration of justice was well organised. The king

was the supreme judge and heard all appeals and decided them with the help of the learned Brahmanas. Separate bodies of officers, with the assistance of the Brahmanas and spies decided the civil and criminal cases. Disputes in villages were settled, as a rule, by the village panchayats. Bifurcation of civil and criminal courts was a significant feature.

Another characteristic feature of Mauryan polity is the maintenance of diplomatic relations with the foreign countries.

It is needles to point out that this excellent administration could not be stable without a strong and a well-disciplined army. Chandragupta's victory over the Greek veteran Seleucus is proof of the ability of the Mauryan army. It consisted of infantry, cavalry, chariots and war elephants. The army administration was carried on by six boards each in charge of a department. Training, organisation, discipline, medical aid and entertainment were duly attended to. There were separate boards for Navy and Transport. It is no surprise if we learn from Greek accounts that the Mauryan army was the strongest in Asia.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Mauryan administration was its spy-system. Chanakya believed that the spies were the eyes and ears of the kings. Therefore, a large net-work of spies worked throughout the length and breadth of the empire and thus kept the king well informed. Megasthenes describes them as "overseers and inspectors." The spies watched all important officers, neighbouring kings and protected the king from conspiracies. They helped the judges in deciding criminal cases by supplying relevant information. The undue importance to spies made it difficult for many honest persons to work efficiently. But the importance of an organised system of espionage and its utility cannot be ignored. Chanakya was a shrewd statesman who realised its importance.

Thus, the Mauryan administration was quite efficient and it almost reached perfection. Such an organisation was planned and operated efficiently in ancient India and it still forms the basis of modern administration.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

With the help of Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya built the first empire in India. It extended almost all over the north and up to the present Mysore State, in the south. The independence and political unity of India were achieved. These were further stabilised by an excellent system of government with the noblest ideals. While the king was supreme, he was necessarily dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of his subjects. "In the welfare of his subjects lies the king's welfare," says *Arthashastra.* His life was regulated from morning to evening by a rigid time-table. Royal functions and obligations were neatly and clearly set out to ensure good government. The selection of governors, ministers, officers, spies, etc., was by certain rigid tests designed to include only those with merit. This political organization was transformed by Ashoka into an ideal *Dharmarajya.* His law was the law of piety. Ashoka himself was *Devanampiya* (favourite of gods). Government was based on justice and love. Conquests were, except in the case of Kalinga, no more military. Ashoka lived up to the teachings of *Dhammapada* which says, "Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy." The *Dharmarajya* was expanded by just bringing more and more people under it by love and persuasion. Ashoka's edicts in the South and the practice of *Dharma* by the South Indian kings outside his empire testify to his peaceful expansion. Kautalya's enumeration of trades and industries to be patronised and regulated by government and the sphere in which the state was to actually enter for trade, has received warm appreciation for its startling modernity. The ideals of Kautalya and Ashoka were actually realised into a real welfare state.

Side by side with this empire, *Ganas* or Republics continued to exist. They are mentioned in both the *Arthashastra* and the Greek records. Small states at the foot of the Himalayas, the Sindhu region and the northern Panjab were *ganas* functioning in the traditional republican way.

SOCIAL LIFE:

Varnas and castes were well developed. Megathenes refers to the seven classes in society. Certainly his account is not a scientific or correct description but it shows how different groups gained importance in their own spheres. Inter-caste marriages were not approved but the free mixture of races was common. *Ashrama-dharma* was well-established as can be seen from the edicts of Ashoka and the *Arthashastra* wherein we read about students, house-holders, philosophers in the jungles and wandering ascetics. The rise of new movements — Jainism and Buddhism — little affected the social structure during this period.

Joint families thrived. Polygamy was practised, especially by rulers and noblemen. There are examples of women who pursued philosophy and led the life of an ascetic. The growing influence of Buddhism was responsible for the rigid codes of conduct for married women. Over-emphasis on asceticism threatened the peace and strength of *Grihasthashrama*, the real back-bone of society.

Megasthenes records that there were no slaves in India. But slavery was an established system. His impression is based on the fact that the number of slaves was small and that they were not treated differently. The rights of slaves have been well-protected in the *Arthashastra.*

Greek and Latin writers draw the picture of a society of honest, disciplined, gentle and cultured people. According to them, in the whole of India there was no theft, no excessive drinking and no breach of promise. Laws were simple as crimes were few and far between. But this is really an exaggerated view. While the society in general was well-organised, standard of morality was high and economic conditions were prosperous, there were certainly all types of criminals. The *Arthashastra* lists a number of crimes and their respective punishments. Moral life was to be promoted by the state. Prostitution, gambling and drinking were rigidly regulated. Ashoka appointed *Dharma-Mahamatras* to look after the widows and help-less women. Their duty was also to punish people who deviated from the path of morality (*Dharma*).

People were simple and sober in case of food, except on the occasion of festivals. Fine and costly dresses were used. Dancing,

singing, games and sports provided entertainment. Halls and amphitheatres were built for drama and boxing contests.

Education was systematised by schools and colleges. Taxila was a great university where literature, philosophy and sciences were taught. Promotion of education and literature was one of the obligations of the state. Literacy and education were wide-spread as can be seen from the Edicts. *Brahmi* and *Kharoshti* scripts were used for Prakrit, Ardhamagadhi and Sanskrit. Variations of this script are seen from the Edicts found in different parts of India. Vocational education was given by the guilds.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

Agriculture and industries were patronised by the state. The *Arthashastra* mentions subsidy to the cultivator, irrigation, measures to fight floods, famine and fire, and such others as obligations of the state. Sufficient attention was paid to the maintenance and breeding of cattle. The state department of industries was created to look after, among other things.

> "The working of mines, the opening of irrigation works, the establishment of factories: the maintenance of preserves and grazing grounds, of highways and commerce, waterways, land routes and other facilities for communications; the establishment of markets and stores; the construction of embankments, drains and bridges; the planting of fruit and flower trees; medicinal plants and herbs; the state protection of the disabled, the helpless and the infirm and also of the lower animals."

State patronage with the strength of the organised guilds greatly increased the prosperity of the country. Numerous "Punch marked" coins of this period speak for its voluminous trade and commerce. Megasthenes records how prices were regulated by state-trading. The idea was that staple commodities were bought when they were cheap and released when the prices were high, just to bring the prices down. This was really a measure far ahead of its time. As Basham points out,

> "It is striking that ancient Indian political theorists anticipated by over 2000 years the plans put forward by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for maintaining a stable level of prices of staple commodities on a world-wide scale."

Thus economic prosperity and social welfare were brought together by the basic principle of *Dharma* (justice).

RELIGION AND CULTURE:

The Vedic continued to be the major religion though the new sects, Jainism and Buddhism took great strides. As R. D. Banerjee points out, "The entire country never accepted Buddhism." It is true at least so far as its organised aspect is concerned. The Mauryan polity was an ideal secular state where all faiths developed freely and harmoniously. The personal beliefs of rulers little affected the state-policy. Chandragupta, a devotee of the Vedic religion, became a Jaina monk. Bindusara was an ardent admirer of Sophists; Ashoka lavishly patronised Buddhism; but all these patronised other sects and faiths also. Religious persecution was never conceived in the minds of kings or the people. Megasthenes records the complete harmony of religious life and makes some interesting comparisons between Greek and Indian gods of *Shiva* and *Herakles*, *Indra* and *Zeus Ombrios*. He also notes the similarity between the philosophical ideas of Brahmanas and those of Pythagoras and Plato.

Art and architecture received a special impetus during this period, under the royal patronage. The highly polished magnificent monolithic pillars stand testimony to the standard of workmanship. The making and transport, over long distances, of the huge monolithic columns of Ashoka's time, required no small degree of engineering and technical skill, and the pillars as well as the interior of the rock-caves of Barabur provide proof that "the art of polishing hard stone was carried to such perfection that it is said to have become a lost art beyond modern powers!" The wood-work and ivory carving had reached a high standard. The building of boats and ships as well as the construction of carts and chariots are mentioned in the *Arthashastra*. In-lay work in furniture and ornaments were of a high order. Ivory was used for such in-lay work. The artistic relics of this period are the stupas, the pillars, the caves and the palaces. The *stupas* were constructed over the place where the relics of Buddha, or a great Buddhist saint were deposited. The great stupa at Sanchi



A TERRACOTTA MEDALLION OF THE MAURYAN PERIOD.

consists of an almost hemispherical dome, truncated near the top and surrounded at its base by a lofty terrace. A large number of stupas were erected during this period. Stone-pillars on which Ashoka's edicts were carved are also specimens of the beautiful Maurya art. They are well-polished and finished. The capitals which are adorned with figures of animals have evoked high appreciation of art critics all over the world. Specially the figures of lions of the Ashoka pillar are wonderfully life-like revealing the perfect carving. Vincent Smith points out, "The fabrication, conveyance, and erection of monoliths of such enormous size — the heaviest weighing about fifty tons, are proofs that the engineers and stone-cutters of Ashoka's age were not inferior in skill and resources to those of any time or country."

The caves, cut out of hard-rock represent patient skill and enormous labour. In fact, the carving of caves continued for a long time and more beautiful and artistic caves have been constructed at a later time. However, during this period, a number of rock-cut caves were constructed of which the Sudama cave is

famous. Of the palaces, the one at Pataliputra, has remained in fragments. But the Chinese traveller, Fa-hien, observes,

> "The royal palace and halls in the midst of the city (Pataliputra), which exist now as of old, were all made by the spirits which he (Ashoka) employed, which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture-work in a way which no human of this world could accomplish."

The special features of the Mauryan art are summarised as:

> "The monolithic pillars combine the dignified and massive simplicity of the shaft with the exquisite and skilful carving of animal figures on their capitals. They reveal a sense of precision and exactitude of the stone-cutter in as much as these huge pieces were cut from a single block of stone. The cave-chapels have a style of their own which is equally chaste and severe. The polish and the skill with which it was applied to impact brilliancy to these stone-monuments is another feature of the art which excites both curiosity and admiration."

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

People spoke various dialectical forms of Prakrit languages in the North, from the Panjab to Bihar and the same languages spread gradually, in modified forms, over Rajputana, Malwa, Sind and Maharashtra. The groups of non-Aryan tribes living in the forest belts of Central Provinces and Chhota Nagpur spoke Munda and Dravidian languages. In eastern Deccan, south of the Godavari and in the South, people spoke Dravidian languages. All the languages were mutually influenced by each other.

But the Sanskrit was definitely the classical literary language in all its glory. Panini who is believed to have written his grammar somewhere between the 8th and the 6th century B.C. gave it the present form. Scholars all over India used Sanskrit for intellectual and literary purposes. The Nandas were patrons of learning. Chandragupta and Bindusara favoured the Sanskrit language and learning in general. Vyadi wrote *Sangraha*, a commentary on Panini's work, *Paribhashas*, rules of interpretation and a dictionary, *Utpalini*. Katyayana, more famous as Vararuchi, was a southerner who wrote *Vajasaneyi Pratishakhya* dealing with

the language of *Shukla Yajurveda.* Bhagavan Katyayana was another grammarian who wrote the *Maha-Vartikas.*

Mahakavi Subandhu, a Brahmana minister of Nandas, Chandragupta and Bindusara, was the author of a remarkable drama, *Vasavadatta-Natya-dhara. Chhandas-Sutras* of Pingala are usually ascribed to an earlier period. Dattaka is reputed to have written a treatise on the art of love at the special request of the courtesans of Pataliputra. Patanjali, the celebrated author of the later period mentions some more works which are lost. Kautalya's *Arthashastra* is a great work which sums up the entire development of political thought of the previous ages. He mentions many authors and schools of thought. Some of the *Sutras* like those of Gautama, Baudhayana, Apastamba and Vasishtha as well as the main portions of the Epics and the early versions of Buddhist and Jaina scripture are all assigned to this period. The *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana is also placed during this age.

KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH:

Kannada inscriptions of the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. retain a faint memory of the Nanda rule over the South. Punch-marked coins found over the Deccan, the South, and Ceylon are clear proof of ancient contact between the North and the South. Mamulmar, an ancient Tamil poet (1st or 2nd century A.D.) refers to the wealth of the Nandas. Jaina tradition asserts that Chandragupta Maurya, along with Bhadrabahu and his disciples, migrated to the South. This is proved by the later inscriptions and also by the name *Chandragiri* given to a hill near the famous Shravana Belgola in Mysore. Megasthenes refers to Ceylon and "*Pandaia*" (Pandya) of the South. The *Arthashastra* praises the quality of pearls of Mannar and the finest cotton fabrics of Madura. Two inscriptions of Ashoka are located in Mysore and one near Gooty. They would indicate the southern limits of his empire. They record his law of piety. Two Rock Edicts of Ashoka mention Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputa, Keralputa and Tambapanni (Ceylon) as friendly nations outside his empire. At Ashoka's instance these countries arranged for hospitals for men

and women, collection and growing of medicinal herbs and roots, propagation of *Dharma* by appointed preachers, etc. The level of culture attained by these people seems to be fairly high. They were well-organised states. The short *Brahmi* inscriptions in numerous natural caverns discovered in the districts of Madura and Tinnevelly and in Ceylon are ascribed to the third century. The name of the hill in the South where these are found is *Kalugumalai* meaning exactly *Gridhrakuta* which is intimately connected with Buddha's life. As the language of these inscriptions is not yet fully understood, the contents are still obscure. These details testify to the antiquity of the South Indian kingdoms that rose to glory soon after this period.

SUMMARY

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA (321-298 B.C.):

Chandragupta was related to the royal family of the Nandas but he had no claim to the throne. He was a capable, ambitious and adventurous young man. With the help and guidance of Chanakya, he collected a large army and defeated the Greeks who had occupied some portion of North India. Encouraged by his success, he attacked and deposed the last Nanda king and ascended the throne of Magadha by 322 B.C.

Seleucus Nikator, one of the ablest Greeks in Asia, invaded India by about 305 B.C. The Mauryan Army was quite efficient and met successfully the Greek invaders. Seleucus was severely defeated and surrendered the rich Satrapies of Herat, Kandahar, Makran and Kabul. Chandragupta, however, behaved generously towards the Greek potentate. He made a present of 500 war elephants to Seleucus, whose daughter he married.

The achievements of Chandragupta stand testimony to his greatness. He won the independence of India by re-conquering the territories lost to the Greeks. He defeated the Nandas and established a vast empire. He stopped the Greek invader Seleucus and extended his territories. He built a very stable governmental machinery and maintained diplomatic relations with foreign rulers. His policy of public works and welfare activities proves his devotion towards the happiness of his subjects. Chandragupta is, thus, a real National Emperor and occupies an important place in Indian History.

CHANAKYA AND MEGASTHENES:

Chanakya was the friend and teacher of Chandragupta Maurya. He was known by three names — Vishnugupta, Chanakya and Kautalya. He

was a great scholar and a shrewd statesman. Chanakya trained Chandragupta Maurya, helped him to overthrow the Nandas and guided him in his administration. Kautalya's *Arthashastra*, is a great treatise on political theory and practice. It discusses the origin of kingship, the scope of the state, inter-state relations and the principles of governmental organization.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta stayed in India for five years. He had opportunities to observe the society and its ways closely. His impressions and observations were recorded in his book "*Indica*". Unfortunately this work is available only in fragments quoted by later Greek and Roman historians. Even these fragments reveal a good deal of Indian life and therefore, are considered to be of great historical importance.

BINDUSARA (298-273 B.C.):

Bindusara was able to maintain the vast empire of Chandragupta intact. So also the diplomatic relations with the foreign countries — Greece and Syria continued: Deimachus, the Greek Ambassador, lived at his court. Antiochos I, son of Seleucus Nikator, King of Syria, exchanged friendly correspondence with Bindusara. Ptolemy, the King of Egypt, sent an ambassador, Dionysius to the Mauryan court.

ASHOKA (273-233 B.C.):

During the reign of Bindusara, Prince Ashoka served as the governor of Taxila and Ujjain. He ascended the throne in 273 B.C. and ruled gloriously for about 40 years.

In 259 B.C. Ashoka invaded the Kalinga and inflicted a deadly defeat on its king. The war with Kalinga is the only recorded one that was fought by Ashoka. The destruction of lives involved in it greatly affected the young king. In spite of his success, he decided to give up war.

With a view of guiding his subjects in the proper way of life, he declared his famous law of piety or *Dharma* — a code of ethics. It prescribes some simple duties like obedience to parents and teachers, proper treatment of Brahmanas and *Shramanas*, kindness to the poor and servants, non-injury to animals, toleration of other religious beliefs, charity, truthfulness, purity of conduct, etc.

Ashoka sent religious missions to Burma, Ceylon, Nepal and some Greek states to expound and popularise Buddhism.

His keen interest in the welfare of his people was proved by his benevolent activities. He prohibited the slaughter of animals. He opened hospitals for human beings and for animals, with free supply of food, medicine, clothing. He constructed roads, and rest-houses. Travel and commerce became safe and comfortable. He looked after the poor, the orphans, the

sick, the widows and other helpless ones. Social security was accepted as the responsibility of the state.

EDICTS:

The edicts of Ashoka speak eloquently about the political, religious and cultural conditions of the period. They help in fixing dates and in understanding the great Emperor Ashoka better.

MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION:

The King was the supreme head of the state. *Arthashastra* emphasizes the sovereignty of the monarch but insists that he must be benevolent. The King was the law-giver, the supreme judge, the commander of the army and the chief executive. He was trained to fulfil these responsibilities.

The central part of the empire was directly administered by the king with the help of a council of ministers and civil servants.

The provinces were governed by *Antapalas* and *Durgapalas*. The districts were under the *Rajukas* who were entrusted with the work of land survey and agriculture. *Pradeshikas* looked after the revenue, as also after peace and order of the districts. The towns were in charge of *Nagaraka* while the *Gramani* was the head of the village. *Sthanikas* were in charge of groups of towns and *Gopas* in charge of groups of villages. They had to maintain records of lands, births, deaths, occupations and foreigners. The administration of villages was carried on by the local Panchayat.

A body of thirty commissioners looked after the administration of Pataliputra. They formed six committies of five each and supervised the various departments.

The King was the supreme judge and heard all appeals and decided them with the help of the learned Brahmanas. Bifurcation of civil and criminal courts was a significant feature of this period.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Mauryan administration was its spy-system. Chanakya believed that the spies were the eyes and ears of the kings. Therefore, a large net-work of spies throughout the length and breadth of the empire, kept the King well informed.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

While the king was supreme, he was necessarily dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of his subjects. "In the welfare of his subjects lies King's welfare" says the *Arthashastra*. This political organization was transformed by Ashoka into an ideal *Dharmarajya*. His law was the law of piety.

SOCIAL LIFE:

Varnas and castes were well developed. Megasthenes refers to the seven classes in society; his account is not a scientific or correct description but it shows how different groups gained importance in their own spheres. Inter-caste marriages were not approved but the free mixture of races was common. *Ashrama-dharma* was well-established as can be seen from the edicts of Ashoka and *Arthashastra*. Students, householders, philosophers in the jungles and wandering ascetics are all mentioned. The rise of new movements — Jainism and Buddhism — little affected the social structure during this period.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

Agriculture and industries were patronised by the state. *Arthashastra* mentions subsidy to the cultivator, irrigation, measures to fight famine, floods and fire, and such others as obligations of the state. Sufficient attention was paid to the maintenance and breeding of cattle. Side by side with agriculture, industries were also promoted. Thus economic prosperity and social welfare were intimately related by the basic principle of *Dharma* (justice).

RELIGION AND CULTURE:

The Vedic continued to be the major religion though Jainism and Buddhism took great strides. All writers on history agree that Mauryan polity was an ideal secular state where all faiths developed freely and harmoniously.

Art and architecture received a special impetus during the period, under royal patronage and the influence of Greeks and Persians. The highly polished magnificent monolithic pillars stand testimony to the standard of workmanship.

The Nandas were patrons of learning. Chandragupta and Bindusara favoured the Sanskrit language and learning in general. Vyadi wrote *Sangraha*, a commentary on Panini's work, *Paribhashas*, rules of interpretation and a dictionary, *Utpanini*. Katyayana, more famous as Vararuchi, was a southerner who wrote *Vajasaneyi Pratishakhya* dealing with the *Yajurveda*. Bhagavan Katyayana was another grammarian who wrote the *Maha-vartikas*. Kautalya's *Arthashastra* is a great work which sums up the entire development of political thought of the previous ages.

KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH:

Two Rock Edicts of Ashoka mention Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputa, Keralputa and Tambapanni (Ceylon) as friendly nations outside his empire. The level of culture attained by these people seems to be fairly high.

6

DISINTEGRATION

LATER MAURYAS AND THEIR DECLINE — SHUNGAS — KANVAS — SHATAVAHANAS — KHARAVELA — FOREIGN RULERS — CIVILIZATION

LATER MAURYAS AND THEIR DECLINE:

AFTER the death of Ashoka the Mauryan empire was divided. Puranas mention Kunala as the successor and the chronicles of Kashmir mention Jalauka as successor to the kingdom of Kashmir after Ashoka. The history of the successors is not clear. The Puranas give a list of six or eight kings who ruled at Pataliputra and Ujjain. Brihadratha is mentioned by all the sources as the last ruler. Pushyamitra, his commander, overthrew the king and established the Shunga dynasty by about 187 B.C. Thus the great Mauryan empire disintegrated in less than 50 years after the death of Ashoka.

During the rule of later Mauryas, the empire began to disintegrate. Kashmir and Bihar were the first to throw off the imperial yoke. Kabul valley was occupied by Subhaga-Sena, who took over the Sindhu valley from the Mauryan empire. Kalinga and Andhra also declared themselves independent. The Shungas, thus, inherited only a truncated empire.

Some writers attribute the decline of the Mauryas to the Brahmana revolt. Pushyamitra was a Brahmana general. Some *Puranas* and *Samhitas* of the later period condemned the later Mauryas for their oppressive rule. But these are not convincing enough to prove a Brahmana revolt as such. There was no reason for such a revolt. Ashoka had won the sympathy and good will of all the clans and sects including the Brahmanas. Brahmana historians like Kalhana praise Ashoka for his piety and benevolent rule. Bana describes Pushyamitra as *anarya* (ignoble) for the overthrow of Brihadratha, the last Maurya. The overthrow of the Mauryan dynasty was only a *coup de grace* warranted by the misrule of the weak king.

The break up of the empire was due to several causes. Ashoka abandoned war for good and the military organisation deteriorated. Later Mauryas were not strong. The vast empire could not be maintained without a strong army. An idealist, Ashoka did not punish the revolting officers or those who oppressed the people. He merely pardoned them after an advice to follow *Dharma*. The entire administrative machinery, therefore, went out of gear. Immediately after the death of Ashoka, several governors and rulers on the border of his empire declared their independence. Finally, when the foreigners invaded India, there was no strong, central and united power to check them.

The history of the period from 200 B.C. to 300 A.D. is based on coins, inscriptions and the Puranas all of which yield conflicting interpretations. "The most interesting aspect of this age lies in the contacts of India with the Western world and their far-reaching consequences." Greeks, Parthians, Kushanas and Satrapas settled in India. The maritime commerce of the South extended up to Rome. Indian art, literature, society and religion, were duly influenced by the West. Thus inspite of the loss of political unity, this period witnessed a cultural change of great importance.

SHUNGAS:

According to the Puranas, the Mauryas were succeeded

by the Shungas who ruled for nearly 112 years (184-72 B.C.). Their founder was Pushyamitra, a Brahmana, commander-in-chief of Brihadratha, the last of the Mauryas. Pushyamitra had gradually consolidated his position, and one day at an army review, the Brahmana General cut off the head of the last of the Mauryas, who was inspecting his forces.

An historical play, the *Malavakagnimitram* of Kalidasa deals with this period. Although a composition of such a kind, written centuries after the event to which it refers, cannot be historical evidence, yet it is generally accepted that its chief characters — Pushyamitra, his son Agnimitra and his grandson Vasumitra — were historical, and that some of the events mentioned — a war with Vidarbha and a conflict with the Yavanas, were real.

Pushyamitra was a great protagonist of the Brahmanical faith. His rise to power represents a great Brahmanical revival. Buddhists accuse Pushyamitra of persecuting the Buddhists and burning their monasteries. No other evidence supports such a view. Liberal donations to the *Sangha* from merchants and corporations and construction of important Buddhist monuments at Sanchi, Barhut and other places during the period deny all hints of persecution. Pushyamitra, however, performed *asvamedha* more than once in the very capital from where not very long before, Ashoka had announced the end of animal-slaughter and sacrifice.

The Shungas, possessed the empire of Magadha, but it was greatly reduced since the death of Ashoka. The long and eventful career of Pushyamitra (187-152 B.C.) was marked by two invasions: (1) King Kharavela of Kalinga, a remarkable personality of this period, is said to have successfully attacked Magadha and humbled the pride of Pushyamitra. (2) King Menander, marched with a large army into the interior of India, and threatened the very capital of the Shunga dynasty, Pataliputra. After a fierce battle, he was driven back by Pushyamitra.

At the same time, his son and Crown Prince Agnimitra who was acting as the governor of Vidisha, waged a successful war against the King of Vidarbha.

Pushyamitra was followed by Agnimitra and eight other

successors. The last one, Vasudeva was assassinated by the ministerial family, the Kanvas.

KANVAS:

In spite of the short duration, the Shunga rule is significant in Indian history. They arrested the process of the break-up of the Mauryan empire. The Greek invasion was checked and repulsed.

The Shungas were also great patrons of religion and learning. Inscriptions at Vidisha reveal that the *Bhagavata* sect was popular. A Greek ambassador accepted this sect and erected a pillar in honour of Vishnu. *Ashvamedha* and other rituals were revived. Patanjali the author of the celebrated *Mahabhashya* was a special friend of Pushyamitra.

The Kanva dynasty lasted for about 45 years (72-28 B.C.) with four kings. Their kingdom was confined to Pataliputra. Very little is known about their rule. The last Kanva was overthrown by the Andhras who were supreme in the Deccan.

SHATAVAHANAS:

The Puranas mention that the last ruler of the Kanva dynasty was killed by an Andhra prince. The inscriptions suggest that a Shatavahana kingdom was in existence much earlier, in the neighbourhood of Ballari in the Kannada area. Gradually, the Shatavahanas occupied the territory at the mouth of Godavari and Krishna, "Andhra-Pradesh", and since then they are known as Andhra-Shatavahanas. The *Aitareya Brahmana* speaks of Andhras as "people beyond the pale of Aryanism." Some inscriptions of the Shatavahanas do not mention Andhra at all. The *Vayu Purana* and the *Matsya Purana* give the Shatavahana dynasties and associate them with the Andhra Desh.

The beginning of the Shatavahana rule is a controversial problem. Some place it during the closing years of the 3rd century B.C. while others trace it from 72 B.C. Simuka is

generally accepted as the founder of the dynasty. Very little is known about him except that he subdued the Kanvas. The Shatavahana dynasty had a long rule of about 400 years.

Simuka was succeeded by his brother Krishna. Krishna and his successor Shri Shatakarni extended the territory of Shatavahanas. Shri Shatakarni was the real founder of the Shatavahana empire. A very wide area from coast to coast in the Deccan, including Maharashtra, Andhra, Berar, Hyderabad and Malwa was under Shri Shatakarni. An inscription records that Shri Shatakarni and his queen performed several sacrifices including *Ashvamedha*, gave away large sums of money and many cattle. Kharavela's inscription in Kalinga mentions Shatakarni as the supreme Emperor of the West. He set up his capital at Pratishthan (Paithan) which achieved glory as a great centre of learning and culture. His successor defeated the Kanvas and the large territory consisting of Oudh, Bihar and Bengal became part of Shatavahana empire. Hala, the 17th ruler is remembered by a reputed poetical work — *Gathasaptashati* (*Sattasai*) — written in Maharashtri Prakrit. Between the times of Shatakarni and Hala, much is not known except that the Shakas of the Western coast began to make inroads into the Andhra empire.

Some epigraphic records are reliable about the rule of Gautamiputra Shatakarni, the 23rd ruler (100-128 A.D.). He restored the glory of his dynasty. Maharashtra, North Konkana, Saurashtra, Malwa, Rajputana, Vidarbha and Paithan were included in the dominions of Gautamiputra according to a cave inscription at Nasik. Some coins confirm the military conquests of Gautamiputra, over the Shakas.

Gautamiputra Shatakarni, was succeeded by his son, Pulamayi, who was a strong and wise ruler. His diplomatic relations with the Shakas, culminated in the marriage of his successor with the daughter of the Shaka Rudradaman. Pulamayi's long reign (128-158 A.D.) was marked by peace and prosperity.

Yajnashri Shatakarni came to glory in 173 A.D. and ruled up to 202. He maintained the strong position of his dynasty, particularly with the Shakas. Coins bearing the picture of a ship support the view that Yajnashri, the master of three seas, started colonial

settlement in Malaya and favoured a flourishing foreign trade. The Andhra empire declined fast after him. It was shared by the Pallavas of the South and by the Kadambas of Karnatak.

During the period of the Andhra Shatavahanas the Deccan achieved cultural progress. The most gratifying feature of their society was the religious harmony. Brahmanism was vigorously revived while Buddhism was lavishly patronised. Education of Buddhist monks was liberally promoted. Numerous caves at Nasik, Karli, Kanheri and several other places started an era of cave monasteries, with landed property attached to them. They were great centres of culture, learning and religion. The Shakas and Yavanas were fully assimilated by the Hindu society. Guilds and castes were powerful.

The political organization was simple. Local administration was left to the feudatories who were of three types: *Rajas*, *Mahabhojas* and *Maharathis*. The first were rulers of conquered countries and the remaining two belonged to the families related to the Emperor. The kingdom was divided into *aharas*, each under a minister (*amatya*). Treasurers, mint-masters, administrators, record-keepers and ambassadors are mentioned in the inscriptions.

During the Andhra regime, women enjoyed high position. They held property and granted generous endowments. They freely participated in the assemblies and in social gatherings. Ornaments were in plenty while dress was scanty. Use of furniture like chairs and tables and beds even in cottages, suggests that life in general was comfortable.

> "Not only the learned men but the artists and builders and artisans and craftsmen went south when Magadha declined. A considerable trade flourished between South India and Europe. Pearls, ivory, gold, rice, pepper, peacocks and even monkeys, were sent to Babylon and Egypt and Greece and later to Rome. Teakwood from the Malabar Coast went even earlier to Chaldae and Babylonia. And all this trade, or most of it, was carried in Indian ships, manned by Dravidians. This will enable you to realise what an advanced position South India occupied in the ancient world. Large numbers of Roman coins have been discovered in the south and, there were Alexandrian colonies on the Malabar Coast and Indian colonies in Alexandria." (J. Nehru)

Prosperity of the period is a well-known fact. The ports on

both the coasts were great centres of flourishing foreign trade. Gold actually flowed into India, through adventurous merchants. Craft-guilds, merchant-corporations and other co-operative organisations stabilised economic prosperity for a long time.

Hala's *Gatha-saptashati* and Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha*, in Prakrit and *Katantra* — a Sanskrit grammar by Sarvavarman are some famous literary works of the Shatavahana period.

KHARAVELA:

Kharavela was a remarkable ruler of the Ancient period. He belonged to the Cheti dynasty of Kalinga, which had been subjugated by Emperor Ashoka. The Kalingas re-asserted their independence. The history of independent Kalinga is shrouded in darkness except for a brief period, when Kharavela rose to sudden prominence. Some light on his achievements is thrown by the *Hathigumpha* inscription. He is said to have ascended the throne at the age of 24 with the title of *Chakravarti*. Soon he started on his career of conquest; he defeated the Shatavahanas in the South, Shungas in Magadha and the Greeks in the north-west.

Kharavela was a Jaina: a great patron of learning and art, and a noteworthy builder. He re-opened a canal cut previously by the Nandas of Magadha but which had been silted since then. He had caves dug out in the Kunjari Parvata for the use of Jaina monks. The definite period of his reign is uncertain, his rise being as sudden as his disappearance. After his death, the kingdom of Kalinga once again declined, being finally absorbed within the Shatavahana empire.

FOREIGN RULERS:

(A) Indo-Greeks:

The political disintegration of India after the Mauryas invited invasions from foreigners. The local princes and rulers were engaged in the disputes, plots and political murders. The foreigners —

the Greeks (Yavanas), the Shakas (Scythians) and the Kushanas — found it easy to establish their rule in India. The history of this period is known from the Puranas, the writings of the Greeks, the coins of the foreign rulers and a few inscriptions.

In about 183 B.C. Demetrius of Bactria reduced to submission a considerable portion of Afghanistan, Sind and the Panjab, and assumed the title of "King of the Indians." But he soon lost Bactria. It was occupied by the wandering tribe of the Shakas. The Greeks after being driven out from Bactria settled down in the Western parts of India. Nearly 32 rulers reigned for about two centuries and although names of most of the Yavana Kings figure prominently in the literature of that age, their history is not known.

Menander, however, is the most distinguished Yavana king. He said to have conquered more nations than Alexander did. The coins of Menander have been discovered in large numbers in the valleys of the Kabul and the Sindhu, in the western districts of U.P. as also in Saurashtra, indicating the wide extent of his empire. He was celebrated as a just ruler, and was highly honoured in India. He was a great patron of Buddhism, and is associated with the book "*The Questions of Milinda.*" He appears to be the Yavana king who invaded Magadha during the reign of Pushyamitra Shunga.

Successors of Menander however were overpowered by the Scythians and the Kushans, and the Greeks were absorbed into the Hindu society.

(B) Shakas and Pahlavas:

The Shakas were driven out from their home in Central Asia and entered India through the Bolan Pass. Some of them might have entered through Kashmir also. As all other foreign tribes Shakas were classed under *Mlechchas* (barbarians) by the ancient Indian writers.

Two branches are known among the Shakas of India. One belongs to the Greek king Moga (Maues) and his successors, and the other to Vonones and his associates coming from Kandahar (Arachosia) and Baluchistan (Gedrosia).

Maues came to power about 72 B.C. His coins carry on them the figures of Shiva and Buddha in addition to those of Greek Gods.

His kingdom extended from Taxila to Pushkalavati. Maues was succeeded by Azes I who cleared Panjab, Gandhara and Kapisa of the Indo-Greeks. Azes I is also credited with the starting of the Vikrama era. But authentic evidence is not yet available for the event.

The rulers of the second branch were Vonones, ruler of Eastern Iran and Arzilises and Azes II ruler of Indian regions. Azes II was followed by Gondopharnes (19-45 A.D.) who had the Persian title Vindapharna meaning "Winner of glory." According to a popular legend, the Christian apostle St. Thomas was martyred in the dominions of this king. But St. Thomas came to South India and died in peace at Mylapore (Madras). The legend is the story of a poetical work "*Sale of St. Thomas*," by Lascelles Abercombie who obviously seems to have got the facts mixed up. The names and connections of the rulers of the second line suggest the close relations between the Shakas and Pahlavas of Iran.

(C) The Kushanas:

The Kushanas were a nomadic tribe of *Yuch-chi* race (moon people) from Central Asia. During the second century before Christ, they had driven out the Shakas from their lands towards India, and had settled down in their place. They thrived and prospered, and due to the increasing pressure of their growing population, they sought new lands. Kadphises I, the chief of the Kushanas, fought the Greeks and the Parthians, and annexed most of the territory east of the Sindhu. He was followed by his son Kadphises II, who conquered the interior of India as far as Varanashi. Some of his gold and silver coins show that he was a devotee of Shiva and had taken upon himself such Hindu titles as *Maharaja*, and *Mahisvara*, and *Satyadharmasthita*.

He was succeeded by king Kanishka whose name stands out like a lone star in the darkness which followed the fall of the Mauryas.

Kanishka is said to have combined in himself the military ability of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Ashoka. With him, the Kushana power in India reached its zenith. With

his capital at Peshawar, he ruled over a rich and extensive empire, stretching from Bihar in the East to Khorasan in the West, and from Khotan in the North to Konkan in the South. He is also credited with having annexed Kashmir to his territory. Hiuen Tsang refers to a war with China, but Kanishka was not finally successful in his expedition against the mighty northern neighbour.

Kanishka is chiefly remembered by posterity for his power and military glory, and also for his patronage of Buddhism. He has left a name cherished by tradition, and famous far beyond the limits of India, in Tibet, China and Mongolia. He is hailed as a great patron of Buddhism, a second Ashoka, who erected at Peshawar a great tower of carved wood, 400 feet high, with 13 storeys. A monastery of exceptional magnificence which stood by its side, continued as a seat of Buddhist learning for many centuries. The final destruction of this 'wonder of the world' must have been at the hands of Mahmud of Gazni and his followers. A Buddhist Council was held in Kashmir, presided over by Vasumitra, and attended by great Buddhist celebrities, Parshva and Ashvaghosha, who according to tradition had been forcibly taken away from Pataliputra by Kanishka. The members, (500) devoted themselves to a thorough examination of the theological literature, and composed huge commentaries on the main divisions of Buddhist doctrine. These included the *Mahavibhasa,* an encyclopaedia of Buddhist philosophy, originally in Sanskrit, but now available only in Chinese translation. The *Mahayana* School of Buddhism was started now. Buddha was raised to the status of God (*Avalokiteshvara*) ; His image began to be worshipped. Thus idol-worship and prayer were introduced into Buddhism. Stress was laid on universal salvation as against the individual salvation of the *Hinayana* school. Sanskrit was adopted in place of Pali, as the language of the *Mahayana* school.

Kanishka was a great builder and a patron of art. The sculptures executed under his orders include a life-size statue of the king himself now to be seen in Mathura Museum. His court was adorned by great Buddhist teachers and scholars.

Kanishka ruled for about 24 years (78-102 A.D.). His successors were weak and unimportant. Thus, the Kushana empire

lost much of its power and glory, and lingered on upto the 4th century A.D.

The age of Kushanas was of great cultural significance. For the first time after the fall of the Mauryas, there was a vast empire which embraced the whole of North India and considerable territories outside it, as far as Central Asia. Trade and commerce brought much precious gold from abroad, Kushana patronage of Buddhism helped the spread of the creed, in Central Asia and China while that of architecture and sculpture enriched this land with great monuments and images. This period witnessed the rise of *Mahayana* Buddhism, development of Gandhara art, and the appearance of the images of the Buddha.

(D) THE WESTERN SATRAPAS:

Satrapa (=*Kshatrapa*) means a provincial governor. The governors under this system of political organization, had wide powers and they were more or less independent. The system was introduced into India by the Indo-Greeks, the Shakas and the Kushanas. Satrapas existed at Peshawar, Mathura and Varanashi, as well as in Malwa and Gujarat. Satrapas of Malwa and Gujarat became famous, as the Western Satrapas, in two separate lines, one of Bhumaka and Nahapana and the other started by Chastana.

Bhumaka and Nahapana belong to a line of Northern Satrapas. Their coins have on them a legend in Kharoshti script. Bhumaka's coins have on them the figure of a lion-capital and *Dharma-chakra*. Probably he might be related to the Shakas of Mathura who were known for a fully inscribed lion-capital in Mathura.

How Nahapana was related to Bhumaka is not clear. He was the greatest ruler among the Satrapas. He conquered Gujerat, Kathiawar, Konkan and a portion of Maharashtra. But soon Gautamiputra Shatakarni overthrew him and recovered all these regions.

The second line of Western Satrapas began with Chastana, ruler of Ujjain. He belonged to a family of provincial governors, under Kanishka I and used the Shaka era. Soon he became independent. His grand-son Rudradaman is immortalised by the rock inscription at Girnar, (A.D. 150). It is one of the few, known for its excellent

Sanskrit and wealth of details and historical material. Fourteen Edicts of Ashoka and an inscription of Skandagupta are on the same rock on which is carved the inscription of Rudradamana. He won many victories against the Andhras and the Yaudheyas. The most important deed of his rule as recorded by the inscription was the reconstruction of the dam of the great Sudarshana Lake, built by Chandragupta Maurya. It was a difficult task and all his ministers advised against the project. But with the help of a Pahlava governor, Suvishakha, and using his privy purse Rudradaman succeeded in completing the gigantic dam. This incident has given rise to a discussion of the power of the cabinet and the people, over the king's privy purse. He had also given his daughter in marriage to a successor of Pulamayi of the Andhra-Shatavahana dynasty. This did not prevent him from defeating the next Andhra ruler twice in a 'fair battle'. Successors of Rudradaman continued as Kshatrapas and Maha Kshatrapas for more than two centuries until they were completely overthrown by Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya of the Gupta dynasty.

The peculiar feature of the Satrapa rule in India was the system of administration which they brought from Persia. One Satrapa was the head of the administration, collecting taxes, controlling the local officials, and the subjects and also acting as the supreme judge of the region. He thus combined in his office civil, judicial and military duties. Though he ruled on behalf of the over-lord, he often showed a tendency to assert his independence and act as if he were the sovereign power. A number of such Satrapas were scattered from Taxila in the North to Konkan in the South, and Mathura and Ujjain in the East.

CIVILIZATION (200 B.C. TO 300 A.D.):

POLITICAL LIFE:

India during this period was divided into a number of states. Along with the monarchical states reviewed above, there were also a few republics like those of the Yaudheyas, the Arjuneyas, the Malavas, the Nagas, and the Kunindas. The interesting feature

was the assimilation of foreigners in Indian Society. The Greek, Shaka, Kushana and Satrapa rulers prided in Indian titles, studied and adopted Indian languages, custom, religion and the method of government. People on their part liked foreign rulers for their willingness to adapt themselves to the new civilization. The Satrapa, Rudradaman is described as a student of *Shabda* (Grammar), *Sabha* (polity), *Gandharva-vidya* (music) and *Nyaya* (logic). Satrapa administration was of a special type with an all powerful provincial officer. Hindus continued to rule on lines laid down in the *Arthashastra.* Patanjali mentions the *Sabha* of Pushyamitra while Kalidasa speaks of *Amatya* and *Mantriparishad* of Agnimitra.

The Shatavahanas followed the same system with modifications to suit local needs. The village watchman (*Talavara*) and their superintendent (*Mahatalawar*) seem to be their new officers.

The South was more fortunate than the North during this period. While foreigners settled in the North, the South built up a vast and strong empire of its own. South Indians spread Indian culture by colonization and commerce in Malaya, Java, Siam and nearby countries. Progress in the development of art, literature, religion and culture was greater in the South than in the North. The North was always exposed to the dangers of foreign invasion. As the South Indian kings had considerably developed their naval strength there was no danger of invasion from across the ocean.

SOCIETY :

The traditional social system was affected by the increasing influx of foreigners. Rules of conduct, restrictions on marriage, food, etc., and the general laws of society were codified in a rigid way. But foreigners were completely absorbed in the society. This was largely due to their position as kings and officials as well as to their willingness to understand and adopt Indian civilization. Even under the Greek rule, Greek was not the official language. In respect of coinage, sculpture and sciences like mathematics, astronomy and astrology, Greeks are gratefully men-

tioned by Indian scholars. Terms such as '*Yavanacharaya*' and '*Yavaneshwara*' were used to mention Greek scholars.

> Another notable feature of the time is the remarkable expansion of foreign trade by land and sea, and the growing importance of a prosperous mercantile class whose wealth and piety are reflected together in the recorded gifts and surviving monuments of the time. There must have been corresponding developments in industry and trade.

Ujjain became a centre of international commerce. Several towns arose between Brigukachcha (Broach) and Pataliputra. Caravans of merchants and pilgrims were a common sight.

LITERATURE:

Sanskrit was used by scholars and officials; it was the language for inscriptions also. The Shatavahanas patronised the Prakrit. Hala's *Gathasaptashati* and Gunadhya's *Brihat-Katha* are outstanding specimens of Prakrit literature of the period. Sanskrit too had its rich harvest of literature. Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* and some versions of *Panchatantra* belong to this period. The famous "six systems" of philosophy, though originated much earlier, were definitely developed in this period. The *Puranas* received their final form during the Gupta age but some of them surely belong to this period.

All the scholars of *Mahayana* Buddhism wrote their works in Sanskrit. *Buddhacharita* and *Saundarananda* of Ashvaghosha are important works of this period. He is reputed to be the first dramatist in Sanskrit literature but none of his dramas have survived. The 14 plays of Bhasa of which any nation can be proud, are assigned to this period. Bharata's *Natyashastra*, and the treatises on medicine by Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Charaka, Sushruta, — are all of this period. The last two were believed to be the court physicians of Kanishka.

RELIGION:

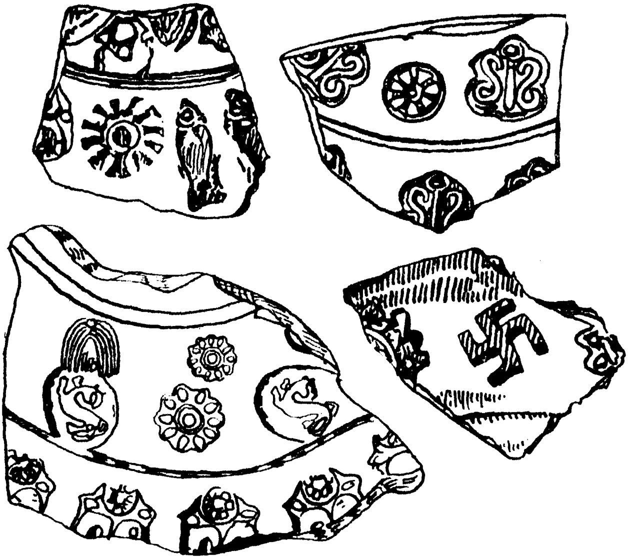
Mahayana Buddhism and the *Bhakti* cult thrived during this period. Originating in the 14th Council of Buddhist scholars during the reign of Kanishka, the *Mahayana* school soon develop-

ed into an important branch of Buddhism. Some fundamental changes were introduced.

> The net result of the change may be summed up by saying that the Buddha is no longer the human seer who discovered and proclaimed the true path, but a living god and saviour; the old ideal of the *Arhat* who seeks his individual release gives place to that of the Bodhisattava who, though fit to enter *nirvana* himself, delays doing so in order to carry the rest of mankind with him. The life of Buddha is rewritten to stress his extraordinary character from his childhood and suggest his divinity,—the *Mahavastu*, the *Lalitavistara* and Ashvaghosha's *Buddhacharita*, being among the early attempts in the line. Sanskrit becomes a language of scripture. A new theology and dialectic grow up and more attention is devoted to metaphysics and *yoga* than in early *Hinayana* schools as they came to be known in contrast to *Mahayana*. Myth and metaphysics are combined in works like *Saddharmapundarika* (the lotus of the good law), quite as much as in the *Bhagavadgita* or the *Harivamsha*. The Buddhas are multiplied like the avataras of Vishnu. The childhood of Buddha and that of Krishna received elaborate mythological handling more or less about the same time. (K. A. N. Shastri).

The *Bhakti* schools, originating in the South, emphasizes the role of devotion in spiritual life. It is placed even above *Jnana* (knowledge) and *Karma* (duty). *Bhakti* is the complete dedication of the devotee to God. Shri Krishna of the *Bhagavadgita* says "*Sarvadharman parityajya mamekam sharanam vraja*" (casting aside all the paths, trust me, completely). This cult was simple and hence popular. Besanagara column of the Greek ambassador, inscriptions of Ghasundi and the *Bhagavadgita* speak of the popularity of the *Bhakti* cult. So also Patanjali speaks of Shiva-*bhagavatas*. The influence of the *Bhakti* cult is seen in several lands outside India. The movement achieved great results in the later period. The Epics, the *Puranas*, the temples, the pilgrimages, the *Maths*, excellent figures of gods—all are the results of *Bhakti* movement. The cult kept the caste system under complete control and saved Hinduism from peril during the Middle Ages. Saints from all parts of India preached to the masses devotion to one God, unity of life and universal love.

Other features of Hinduism—sacrifices and rituals were also revived by the Shungas, the Kanvas, and the Shatavahanas. Inscriptions record the performance of the *Ashvamedha* by these rulers.



Fragments of Kushan Pottery.

Religion in general was patronised. This was true of Kanishka also. Buddhists claimed him to be a second Ashoka. Kanishka patronised all religions and there is no evidence that he gave special patronage to Buddhism. His coins bear the figures of Shiva, Buddha, Vishnu, Zoraster and other Persian and Greek gods. He must have built the great tower at Peshawar. There is no evidence that the famous fourth Council of the Buddhist monks was held at his will. Simply because the council was held during his period, we cannot say that it was convened by Kanishka. It is enough to remember that Kanishka promoted all sects and Buddhism also received its share. The cave-monasteries of the Shatavahana period were financed by the guilds of merchants and artisans. It is India's tradition that religion and culture never depend on political patronage. Often they flourish inspite of a hostile or foreign rule.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

In the realm of art and architecture, we find the deepest impact of the Greeks and the Persians. A school of architecture originated in Gandhara where Greeks and Indians lived together. *Gandhara* style is a fine blending of Hindu and Greek styles. Figures, pillars, *stupas*, *chaityas* of this period are the examples of this style. Stupas at Sanchi and Barhut, Chaitya at Karli, *Garuda* column of the Greek ambassador and many figures of the Buddha are some of the fine specimens. Coinage was developed by the Greeks. Indo-Greeks, Scythians and Kushans introduced several types of gold and silver coins with inscriptions and figures of gods and kings. *Ganarajyas* issued their own coins, even as the Shatavahanas had their own. Greek singers were welcome at the Indian courts. Greek scientists were honoured as *Rishis* (Sages).

SUMMARY

LATER MAURYAS AND THEIR DECLINE:

Ashoka's successors were weak and they could not hold the empire in tact. Governors of the border-states became independent. Foreigners invaded and set up their kingdoms. Therefore, the empire disintegrated fast. The last Maurya ruler was a weak and wicked person who was killed by Pushyamitra, the founder of the Shunga dynasty.

SHUNGAS (184-72 B.C.); KANVAS (72-24 B.C.):

The founder of the Shunga dynasty Pushyamitra was a great soldier. He protected Pataliputra against the attacks of Kharavela and Menander. He patronised Vedic religion. He was succeeded by Agnimitra, the hero of Kalidasa's drama. Successors of Agnimitra were weak and the empire passed into the hands of the Kanvas.

In spite of its short duration, the Shunga rule is significant. The Shungas arrested the process of the break-up of the Mauryan empire. The Greek invasion was checked and repulsed. The Shungas were great patrons of religion and learning. Inscriptions at Vidisha reveal that the *Bhagavata* sect was popular. A Greek ambassador accepted this sect and erected a pillar in honour of Vishnu. *Ashvamedha* and other rituals were revived. Patanjali, of the *Mahabhashya* fame was a good friend of Pushyamitra.

SHATAVAHANAS (200 B.C. TO 200 A.D.):

Originating somewhere near Ballari, the Shatavahanas extended their sway over the entire Deccan. There were about 20 to 40 rulers of this dynasty of whom Shri Shatakarni, Hala, Gautamiputra, Yajnashri were important.

The glorious rule of the Shatavahanas increased the prosperity of the people because the rulers patronised crafts and foreign trade. During the period of the Andhra-Shatavahanas the Deccan achieved great literary and cultural progress. The most gratifying feature of their society was the religious harmony. Brahmanism was vigorously revived while Buddhism was lavishly patronised. Education of Buddhist monks was liberally promoted. Numerous caves at Nasik, Karli, Kanheri and other places heralded an era of cave monasteries. With property donated by the public to them, they became centres of culture, learning and religion.

KHARAVELA:

Kharavela of the Chedi dynasty revived the glory of Kalinga. He assumed the title of *Chakravarti* and defeated the neighbouring kingdoms. He was Jaina and patronised religion, learning, art and architecture. The famous Hathigumpha cave inscription is a record of his achievements.

FOREIGN RULERS:

Of the several foreign rulers of this period, Menander of the Indo-Greeks and Kanishka of the Kushanas are noteworthy.

Menander, however, was a distinguished Yavana king. He is said to have conquered 'more nations than Alexander'. The coins of Menander have been discovered in large numbers in the valleys of the Kabul and the Sindhu, in the western districts of U.P. and in Saurashtra, indicating the wide extent of his empire. He was celebrated as a just ruler, and was highly honoured. He was a great patron of Buddhism, and is associated with the celebrated book "*The Questions of Milinda*". He appears to be the Yavana king who invaded Magadha during the reign of Pushyamitra Shunga.

Kanishka combined in himself the military ability of Chandragupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Ashoka. With him, the Kushana power in India reached its zenith. With his capital at Peshawar, he ruled over a rich and extensive empire, stretching from Bihar in the East to Khorasan (North-East part of modern Persia) in the West, and from Khotan in the North to Konkan in the South. He is also credited with having annexed Kashmir.

He has left a name cherished by tradition, and famous far beyond the limits of India, Tibet, China and Mongolia. He was a great patron of

Buddhism, a second Ashoka, who erected at Peshawar a great stupa of carved wood, 400 feet high, with 13 storeys. Kanishka is also reputed to be a great builder and a patron of art. The famous sculptures executed under his orders include a life-size statue of the king himself. His court was adorned by great Buddhist teachers and scholars.

CIVILIZATION (200 B.C. TO 300 A.D.):

POLITICAL LIFE:

India was divided among a number of kingdoms and republics. Foreign rulers became Indians in all possible ways and won the trust of the people. All foreigners were finally absorbed in the Hindu society. The Shatavahanas followed the traditional pattern of government. Indeed, South was more fortunate and achieved greater progress.

SOCIETY:

Foreigners were absorbed. Though caste-rules appeared rigid, the society was really cosmopolitan. Foreign scholars are mentioned with respect.

A notable feature of this period is the expansion of foreign trade by land and sea. Many towns and harbours prospered.

LITERATURE:

In Prakrit, we have Hala's *Gatha-saptashati* or *Sattasai* and Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha*, while there are a number of famous works in Sanskrit: Patanjali's *Mahabhashya*, *Panchatantra*, parts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, some *Puranas*. The works of the *Mahayana* Buddhism were in Sanskrit.

RELIGION:

The *Bhakti* cult and the *Mahayana* school of Buddhism flourished during this age. These two, brought Hinduism and Buddhism together. Hindu rituals like *Ashvamedha* were revived. All kings were generous and patronised all sects.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

The Gandhara school of architecture produced fine figures, pillars, *chaityas*, *stupas* etc. Coinage and music showed influence of the Greeks.

7

THE GOLDEN AGE

THE NAGAS — THE VAKATAKAS — THE GUPTAS — CIVILIZATION

THE NAGAS:

INDIA was split up into small kingdoms after the fall of the Kushanas and the Andhras. Of the dynasties that had set up their rule, two are important: (i) Nagas and (ii) Vakatakas.

The Naga princes (*Bharashivas*) are mentioned in the *Puranas*. Originally they ruled over Vidisha towards the close of Shunga rule. Forced by the Shakas and the Satrapas, the Nagas moved southwards and beyond the Vindhyas. They built a small kingdom at Nagpur and ruled there for about two centuries. Much is not known about the achievements of the Nagas but what little information is available clearly shows their role in the revival of Hindu power.

Nava-naga, after the decline of the Kushana empire (about 200 A.D.) consolidated his power and attacked the Kushanas. Thus he fought for about 30 years and greatly subdued the foreigners.

Virasena, the successor of Navanaga was a great patriot, soldier and statesman. He organised the campaign against foreigners and he was successful in ousting the Kushanas. Hindu

rule was re-established in Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand and the Ganga-valley. Virasena ruled over a stable state for about 40 years. His successors were four and the last Bhavanaga (about 300 A.D.) concluded a marriage alliance with the Vakatakas, the rising rulers of the Deccan. After the death of Bhavanaga, the Naga kingdom was inherited by Rudrasena Vakataka, and the Vakataka empire became wider and stronger.

All the Naga rulers were great warriors and fought to re-establish Hindu authority. They revived Hindu power and culture. This was later on completed by the Vakatakas and the Guptas. The Nagas were worshippers of Shiva and revived old *Vedic* rites. Being patrons of learning, they promoted the study of Sanskrit language. The *Devanagari* script was perhaps perfected during the reign of the Nagas.

THE VAKATAKAS:

The early history of the Vakatakas is not known. An inscription of the Ajanta caves states that Vindhyashakti, a Brahmana, was the founder of this dynasty. His capital was Kilakali in Bundelkhand. There is no title attached to his name. But the title *Samrat* is attached to the name of his son Pravarsena I. Pravarsena I was a strong ruler and a wise statesman. He ruled for 60 years (284-344 A.D.) and performed the horse-sacrifice. By a marriage with the Naga princess, he extended his empire and strengthened his position.

Rudrasena, the grandson of Pravarsena, inherited the combined kingdom of the Nagas and the Vakatakas. Thus a strong empire in Central and Northern India was established. Samudragupta seems to have overpowered Rudrasena for a while, but his son Prithvisena extended his empire southward upto the present Karnataka. Though a contemporary of the great Gupta conqueror, Samudragupta, Prithvisena maintained his kingdom intact and ruled for about 25 years.

As the Vakatakas held an important position, the Guptas thought it wise to be friendly with them. Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) gave his daughter to Rudrasena II (375-395 A.D.), successor of Prithvisena.

After Rudrasena II, his queen, Prabhavati Gupta, ruled for 20 years and then her son, Pravarasena II for another 20 years. Among the later Vakatakas, Harishena (468-502) turned the political chaos created by the declining Guptas to his own advantage and extended his empire over Avanti, Kalinga, Trikuta and Andhra.

Thus, the Vakatakas built a strong empire, and held their own in spite of the mighty Guptas and several political upheavals. They occupied a strategic position and could influence both the Southern and the Northern kingdoms.

They helped the Nagas in driving out the foreigners like the Shakas and the Kushanas. Thus they succeeded in establishing Hindu authority and created an excellent background for the Guptas. With the revival of Hindu power, Hindu culture was also revived. New life was instilled into Hinduism. Ritual, art, literature and education, began to flourish once again. The Vakatakas patronised art and literature. Some of the Ajanta caves seem to have been the work patronised by the Vakatakas who ruled over the territory for a long period. They were essentially a Deccan power. Pravarsena II wrote the poetical work *Setubandha*. Kalidasa, the court-poet of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, visited the court of the Vakatakas and wrote his '*Meghaduta*' there. (See also Chapter IX).

Thus the Vakatakas, like the Nagas, began the revival of Hindu power and culture. Their occupation of the important position, early struggle with the foreigners, alliance with the Nagas and Guptas, and their patronage of art and literature are worthy of note and bring out their significance.

THE GUPTAS:

CHANDRAGUPTA I:

The origin and the early history of the Guptas is not known in detail. They lived in the Panjab. Some of them got into the service of the Shaka rulers and migrated to Uttara Pradesh and Bihar where they settled as officers and governors. After the decline of the Shakas, the Nagas allowed the Indian officers to

hold their estates. Thus encouraged, they began to stabilise their authority. By the end of the 2nd century A.D. one Shrigupta is described as the ruler of Magadha, by I-Tsing, a Chinese traveller. But the extent of Shrigupta's kingdom and his origin are not known. Shrigupta was succeeded by his son Ghatotkacha who was able to maintain his kingdom in good order and bequeath it to his son Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta I was the real founder of the Gupta power. Being a great warrior and a statesman, he occupied an eminent position as *Maharajadhiraja.* His career is not fully known but his main achievement consists in having established a stable and strong government within a short period of fifteen years (320-335 A.D.). In this great task, Chandragupta I was helped by the ancient warrior clan of the Lichchavis. He married the Lichchavi princess Kumaradevi. He gave equal importance to his Queen by placing her portrait, along with his own, on his coins and specially mentioning her Lichchavi family. Even his son, Samudragupta, proudly bore the name *Lichchavi-dauhitra* (grandson of the Lichchavis). The Lichchavi-Gupta alliance was thus responsible for the foundation of the Gupta empire. Chandragupta, with the help of Lichchavis, took Pataliputra from the Kota family. But he abandoned it as the people turned against him, and settled in Ayodhya. The Guptas now became masters of a territory comprising Magadha, Ayodhya, Oudh and Tirhut.

It is well-known that Chandragupta I started the *Gupta* era (320 A.D.) probably to commemorate his coronation.

Thus the three early Guptas prepared the solid foundation on which Gupta empire could be erected. Chandragupta's alliance with the Lichchavis and their help in his work are to be specially noted. Chandragupta chose Samudragupta as his heir and successor, who became the most eminent emperor of the Gupta dynasty and justified his father's choice.

SAMUDRAGUPTA :

Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta I, was the greatest military leader of his time. He established a vast empire by subduing several kings and ruled for about 40 years (335-375

A.D.). The most reliable source of information about Samudragupta is the inscription on Ashoka's pillar at Prayag, known as the Allahabad Pillar inscription. It was composed by his court poet, Harishena and faithfully summarises his military achievements. To fully appreciate the importance of his conquests a review of the then existing political conditions is necessary.

The Magadha empire was surrounded by powerful and independent rulers like the Nagas, the Vakatakas, the Shakas and several republican tribes. Many small kingdoms were created in the South after the fall of the Shatavahanas. In the extreme North, Panjab, Rajputana, the Himalayan region, and the East, independent kingdoms existed. Therefore, it was really a difficult task for Samudragupta to bring them under his control. He conducted three military campaigns as described in the Allahabad inscription.

In the first, the North Indian campaign, he subdued the Nagas and annexed the region around Mathura, Rohilkhand and Gwaliar to his empire. He strengthened his hold on Magadha by recovering Pataliputra.

Next he turned to the South which was under the influence of the Vakatakas. This campaign took him more than two years but his empire was greatly extended. According to the inscription, he defeated 11 kings. He marched through Vindhya forests, Kaling and along the east coast upto the river Krishna on the banks of which he met successfully a group of South Indian Kings, led by Vishnugupta of the Pallava family.

His third campaign was again directed to the North. Kings of the North-East, the Himalayan region, the tribal principalities of the Panjab, Western India, Malwa and Assam, all these were subdued and made to pay tribute. The rulers of Afghanistan, the Panjab, Saurashtra and Central India and several tribal chiefs thought it wise to conclude peace by acts of homage.

The empire of Samudragupta extended from the river Hooghly to the Jamuna and the Chambal, from the foot of the Himalayas to the Narmada. In addition to this vast empire which was under his direct control and administration, an extensive region in all directions was under his influence. The

rulers of all the outlying states were anxious to continue friendly relations with this great conqueror. The King of Ceylon, Meghavarna, requested Samudragupta for permission to build a monastery for Buddhist pilgrims at Gaya. Having established his sway over such a wide area, this great conqueror performed the horse-sacrifice. Thus he once again revived the ancient rites and rituals. He assumed the title — *Ashvamedha-parakramah* — and gold coins were struck with the image of the sacrificial horse on them.

Samudragupta was not only a great warrior but also a great patron of art and literature. According to Harishena, Samudragupta was a poet and bore the title '*Kaviraja.*' The gold coins bear the emperor's figure playing the Vina. He was liberal in his patronage of art and culture. Vasubandhu, the great Buddhist scholar, flourished in the court of Samudragupta.

Samudragupta was a great scholar, statesman, administrator and patron of art and literature. He ruled for about 40 years, long enough to stabilise his conquest and administration.

CHANDRAGUPTA II:

Chandragupta II ascended the throne in 375 A.D. and ruled for about 40 years. The inscriptions, coins and the writing of the Chinese traveller, Fa-hien are the main sources of the information about him. His military achievements, excellent administration, liberal religious policy and generous patronage of learning — all have justified his popular title — *Vikramaditya.* He is mentioned in the inscriptions as *Devagupta, Devashri* and *Devaraja.* The coins bear the figures of the 'archer', 'lion-slayer' and of a warrior in full battle dress. It is no wonder that *Vikramaditya's* rule is considered as the most glorious period of Indian history.

Samudragupta left a vast empire which extended almost all over India. But here and there remained some independent kingdoms, and Chandragupta was called upon to deal with them. The Shaka-Satrapas had occupied Malwa and Gujarat — two very prosperous and important provinces. Moreover, they were the last of the foreign rulers. To invade these regions it was neces-

sary to pass through the Vakataka empire. The Vakatakas were strong and Chandragupta did not want to waste his time and energy in fighting them. So, he wisely concluded a matrimonial alliance with the Vakatakas, by giving his daughter Prabhavati in marriage to Rudrasena II. Thus he secured their help and goodwill and invaded the Shaka territories, scored a complete victory, and annexed them to his empire.

Chandragupta's conquest of Malwa and Gujarat was very important. His empire was extended upto the Western Sea. His political prestige was enhanced. These provinces were conducting a flourishing trade with Western countries and were therefore prosperous. The revenues of the Gupta government increased by the addition of these rich provinces. The Magadha kingdom was once again brought, through these two regions, in direct contact with the Western countries. The merchants of Pataliputra began to have commercial relations directly with the Western countries. Ujjain, capital of Malwa also gained in prestige and importance. Now Chandragupta made it his second capital and thus it achieved political importance. Chandragupta had perhaps, a closer association with Ujjain than with Pataliputra.

Chandragupta waged some minor wars also. He achieved the credit of having completed the task of building an all-India empire. During the reign of Chandragupta there was no power in India to challenge the authority of the Guptas.

Chandragupta was a devotee of Vishnu and is described as *Parama-bhagavata*. But he was liberal in his religious views, and generously helped Buddhist and other charitable institutions. He appointed persons of different sects to high executive posts. His Commander-in-Chief Amrakaradeva was a Buddhist and his minister Virasena was a Shaiva. Fa-hein supports the view that Chandragupta was a king of liberal religious views.

This Gupta emperor was a generous patron of art and literature. Being a man of accomplishments himself, he encouraged learning. Ujjain has been known for the "Nine gems," representing all arts and sciences who shone at the court of Vikramaditya. Kalidasa — the well-known poet and dramatist of India was one

of them. Literature and Sciences were greatly developed during the Gupta period.

Chandragupta perfected the administrative machinery. The country was divided into provinces and districts. Officers of these divisions were assisted by the local representative bodies. According to Vincent Smith, "India was never ruled better than during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya." Charitable institutions like hospitals, orphanages, and rest homes were numerous. The moral standard of the people was also very high. Fa-hein describes the subjects of the Gupta empire as honest and virtuous, not indulging generally in gambling or drinking. The state shared with its citizens the responsibility of maintaining proper moral standards.

An able warrior, wise statesman, liberal and generous patron, efficient administrator, Chandragupta was, thus, the most enlightened emperor of the Guptas.

KUMARAGUPTA I:

Kumaragupta I succeeded Chandragupta II in about 414 A.D. and he too ruled for about 40 years. An inscription at Mandasor in Western Malwa suggests that he won some battles and added some territories to the already vast empire.

Some new gold coins introduced by Kumaragupta I, were found over a wide area. The most famous among them was the gold coin with the figure of Kartikeya riding his peacock on one side and of the King feeding a peacock, on the other. He assumed the title of *Mahendraditya* and performed the horse-sacrifice.

His inscriptions reveal that the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. Trade and commerce flourished under the *Shrenis* (Guilds). Western Malwa was known for its cotton and silk goods which very soon became popular all over India.

Some names of ministers and governors are mentioned in the inscriptions. Govindagupta, younger brother of the emperor was in charge of Saurashtra, Chitradatta in charge of Bengal and Ghatotkacha in charge of Malwa. Prithvisena, son of Samudra-

gupta's Chief Minister, Shikhariswami, was the Chief Minister and later on Commander-in-Chief of Gupta armies.

Towards the end of Kumaragupta's rule the empire was invaded by the Pushyamitras, a tribe of unknown origin. Recent researches show that they were probably white Hunas. Their first attack was in 450 A.D. As Kumaragupta was old, Prince Skandagupta was sent to resist them. The struggle seems to have been severe and long-stretched. Kumaragupta died before Skandagupta defeated the invaders.

The writings of Hiuen-Tsang and I-Tsing suggest that Kumaragupta was a generous patron of the Nalanda University. It seems that the liberal religious policy, generous patronage to arts and literature and efficient administration of Chandragupta II continued in the long reign of Kumaragupta I.

SKANDAGUPTA:

Skandagupta ruled for a brief period of about 12 years (455 to 468 A.D.). He defeated his rival claimants to the throne and succeeded Kumaragupta I. The Junagadh inscription records that the goddess of sovereignty chose him quite voluntarily as her husband. He struck gold coins depicting Lakshmi with a lotus and the royal fillet in her hands, facing the King who is standing with a bow and arrow. He is known by the names *Kramaditya* and *Vikramaditya*.

The Bhitari inscription records his victory over the Hunas and how the prince installed the image of Vishnu, as an act of thanksgiving. Skandagupta broke the pride of *Mlechchas* (the Hunas) who had attacked his empire. The problem of defending the frontiers was a serious one. The emperor after careful deliberation sent Puranadatta as governor of the western provinces and Sarvanga Vishayapati as that of the Doab. In this way, he restored the prestige of the Guptas which had suffered because of the Huna invasion. He once again established peace and order as well as the suzerainty of the Guptas. But towards the end of his rule, the Hunas poured down in the Panjab and Rajputana and could not be checked by the successors of Skandagupta, who died by 468 A.D.

During the brief reign of Skandagupta, the empire was successfully defended against the grave danger of the barbarian invasion. Peace and order were restored. Trade and commerce flourished and the coins regained their value. Skandagupta paid attention to public works. The great Sudarshana lake of Chandragupta Maurya was now enlarged at a great cost. It is unfortunate that this able emperor's rule was brief. With his death declined the glory of the Gupta empire.

Later Guptas and their decline:

Skandagupta was succeeded by Purugupta, probably his brother. But at this time the empire seems to have been divided among the rival claimants. While Purugupta ruled in Pataliputra, two other branches started their independent rule, one in the Central Magadha and the other in Malwa. Purugupta was followed by his son Narasinhagupta who in turn succeeded by his son Kumaragupta II. Vainyagupta, Praksashaditya and Ghatotkacha belong to the second group. Their relation with Skandagupta is not known. The third group consisted of Kumaragupta III, Budhagupta and Bhanugupta who have left a few coins and inscriptions that tell their names and dates. According to these, the last Gupta ruled upto 545 A.D.

With the divided empire, the military strength of the Guptas also declined. The Hunas began to pour into the North-West and they could not be checked by the weak successors of Skandagupta. The Huṇas established their rule as early as 484 A.D. under Tormana. The Huna invasion was an effective cause of the break up of the Gupta empire. Taking advantage of the political chaos, several small independent states rose to power.

CIVILIZATION:

The Age:

The revival of the Hindu power in the North started by the Nagas and the Vakatakas brought about a great cultural renaissance.

The period from 320 A.D., the beginning of the rule of Chandragupta I upto the death of Skandagupta in 468 A.D. is considered as the Golden age of the Guptas. The cultural revival however started much earlier and the contribution of the Vakatakas also, as brought to light by recent researches, is both magnificent and significant. Being friendly with the Guptas, the Vakatakas did not follow any policy of expansion in the North. Their empire was extended towards the South. Most of the famous remains of artistic and architectural achievements like the caves of Ajanta and Ellora and Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* belong to the Vakataka share of the cultural renaissance. Generally the cultural progress of this period is attributed to their grander contemporaries, the Guptas. To give due credit to the Vakatakas, some scholars call this period as "Vakataka-Gupta" age. However, for the sake of brevity the term Gupta age may be used. The following brief review does not try to distinguish between the contributions of the Vakatakas and the Guptas.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS:

India became once again united, strong and glorious during this period. Chandragupta Vikramaditya has the credit of driving away all foreigners. By his benevolent rule, he stabilised the peace and quickened the pace of progress of India. Cultural unity was combined with the political unity. A few of the remaining tribal republics disappeared by the end of the fourth century. The monarchical states continued to function in the traditional way based on *Dharma*. The high titles used by the Gupta emperors do not signify their divinity. Inscriptions of the period record their education, training, self-discipline and their devotion to the welfare of the people. King continued to be the centre of government, assuming all supreme powers to himself. But this did not lead to autocracy. King's supremacy was more or less formal.

"Almost all the functions of government, other than defence and foreign relations were decentralised as far as possible and left to the care of the autonomous local bodies functioning under the general supervision of the Central government which varied in intensity from state to state and from time to time. Respect for customary laws including those made

by local bodies, guilds and other voluntary associations, was the most potent check on autocracy."

ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM: *Monarchy*:

The Guptas discarded the modest title of Rajan (king), which had for the most part contented the indigeneous dynasties of earlier times, and adopted the high sounding style brought into vogue by the rulers of the past. The most characteristic of such titles was *Maharajadhiraja* adopted by the Guptas from Chandragupta I onwards in their inscriptions, coin-legends and seals. But Gupta coins and inscriptions contain several variants of their title such as *Rajadhiraja, Paramarajadhiraja, Rajadhirajashri* etc. To the above the Guptas added other epithets claiming for themselves superhuman qualities which raised them almost to the levels of the Gods. Thus in the Allahabad Pillar inscription Samudragupta is referred to as a 'god dwelling on earth'. In the later genealological accounts also he is habituality described as equal to the gods, Kubera, Varuna, Indra and Yama. With the same object of claiming superhuman excellence, the coin legends of the Gupta emperors from the time of Samudragupta refer to them as having "acquired heaven (by good deeds) following their conquest of the earth."

The *Smritis* and the inscriptions of the period emphasise that a king can become a successful ruler only if he waits upon the elders, studies the art of government, cultivates religiousness and protects his subjects as efficiently as the divine guardians. Irreligious, haughty, immodest and tyrannical kings were never regarded divine; they were severely condemned. *Smritis* emphasised the necessity of training princes in the political science and military art, though we do not get details of the training of the Gupta princes, whose education was, no doubt, entrusted to the most learned scholars of the age.

Next in rank to the emperor stood the Crown Prince. The rule of succession in the Gupta empire was hereditary descent in the male line. But the emperor frequently exercised the right of selecting his heir-apparent.

Younger brothers of the ruler were usually appointed to the post of provincial governors. If a king had no sons, the younger

brother used to act as heir-apparent. Queens of reigning kings and princesses do not appear to be taking any active part in the administration. Dowager queens, however, were often assuming the reigns of administration.

Powers of the king appeared to be absolute; he was, as usual the centre of all military, political, administrative and judicial authority. He no doubt governed with the assistance of a ministry, but the ultimate responsibility of a final decision rested with him. He was often his own commander-in-chief and used to lead important military campaigns. All viceroys, governors and high military and civil officers were appointed by, and responsible to him. The Secretariat at the capital worked under his personal direction and supervision, and the provincial governors and their officers were under their control and guidance. He distributed titles and favours in recognition of meritorious service or literary and artistic works of distinction. The people were expected to control the king, if he was acting against the established laws and customs. Large powers were delegated to local bodies like the village *Panchayats* and town councils.

Ministry:

The *Smritis* and the inscriptions often refer to ministers as *Mantris* or *Sachivas*, but do not give us accurate information about the strength of the ministry or about the portfolios held by its different members. We get some information from the inscriptions that the ecclesiastical, military, revenue, land and trade departments were held by different members of the ministry. Prithvisena was first, a minister (*Mantrin*) of Kumara Gupta I; and was later promoted to the post of a general (*Mahabaladhikrita*). Harishena, who was a foreign minister under Samudra-gupta, was also a military general (*Mahabaladhikrita*).

The Central Government:

The Guptas continued the traditional machinery of bureaucratic administration with nomenclature mostly borrowed or adopted from earlier times. The *Mantri* (High Minister), whose office is known

to Kautalya's *Arthashastra*, evidently stood at the head of the civil administration. The capital of the kingdom was the headquarters of the Central Secretariat, whose chief officer was called *Sarvadhyaksha*, (the general superintendent of the administration). This officer conveyed the orders of the Central Government to the provincial and district officers through special messengers and inspectors.

The Central Secretariat accommodated the offices of the different ministers and the heads of departments. Each office had its own seal with which its communications were invariably stamped for authentication. Routine business was transacted by each minister but important matters were referred to the whole council, which was presided over by the king.

Pratiharas and *Mahapratiharas*, were important officers in the royal court. They regulated its ceremonial and granted the necessary permission for admission to the royal presence.

The military department was undoubtedly the most important department at the centre. The king was its head always, except when he happened to be a minor; and he was assisted by the heir-apparent, if old enough. There were a number of *Mahasenapatis* under the kings and they and their armies possibly were posted in different provinces. *Mahadandanayakas* appear to be the subordinates of *Mahasenapatis*. The fighting force was divided into infantry, cavalry and the elephant corps. Each branch had its different cadre of officers and they bore significant titles like the *Ashvapatis*, *mahashvapatis*, *pitupatis* and *mahapitupatis* (captains) brigadiers in the cavalry and elephant corps. Weapons used in the army were bows and arrows, swords, battle-axes, spears, javelins, barbed darts, etc., and the soldiers were provided with armours and helmets.

The police department must have had its own chief, but his designation is not known. The *Dandapashikas*, referred to in the seals from Basar, were probably of the status of the modern district Superintendents of Police. Ordinary members of the police force were known as *chatas* and *bhatas*.

The revenue minister supervised the collection of taxes and revenues. These were paid partly in kind and partly in cash, and the government had to make elaborate arrangements for the proper administration of its granaries. Forests and mines of salt and

metals were the state-property and their administration was most probably in the charge of the revenue department. The administration of the waste lands, which also were owned by the state, was left in charge of the Municipal board or the village council, in whose jurisdiction they were situated.

Hindu tradition required the king to administer justice himself, when he was present at the capital. If ill-health or pressure of other work prevented him from discharging this duty, the Chief Justice presided over the court at the capital and decided cases with the help of jurors. The Supreme Court tried important cases and entertained appeals against the decisions of the lower courts. The evidence of the contemporary *Smriti* of Brihaspati shows that the judicial procedure was very well developed in the Gupta period. The class of professional pleaders had not yet come into existence; the jurors were expected to analyse the case, ascertain the points favourable for either party and weigh them impartially for coming to a proper decision.

The Ecclesiastical Minister was in charge of *Dharma* (ethical life) of the realm. He had his own subordinates at the provincial and district headquarters, who were designed as *Vinayasthitisthapakas* (establishers of moral standard). This department advised the king about the promotion of *Dharma* in different aspects and suggested suitable objects and occasions for charity. It also supervised the administration of public temples. Promotion of learning by grants to learned Brahmanas and Buddhist and Jaina Monasteries carrying on the work of education probably fell within the purview of this department. Officers in charge of villages assigned for charitable causes were known as *Agraharikas*.

Trade and industries were prospering and brought considerable revenues to the royal treasury. Their affairs were probably under the charge of a separate minister. *Drangikas* (Octroi officers), who figure in Valabhi and other records, must have worked and collected the duties under his direction. This department was in charge of roads, the rest-houses which excited the admiration of Fa-hien.

The foreign minister, *Mahasandhivigrahika*, worked in close co-operation with the king and the military department. Kingdoms

and feudatory states, their treaties and relations with the Imperial power, was the work of the foreign ministry. The spy system too was under this ministry and it had an elaborate plan of working because of the presence of many rulers under the Imperial power. Feudatory and subordinate states could not of course issue their own currency.

Kumaramatyas:

A class of officers known as *Kumaramatyas*, figure very prominently both in the seals and inscriptions of the Gupta period. Harishena, who was the foreign minister of Samudragupta, and Sikharisvami and Prithvisena who were ministers of Chadragupta II and Kumaragupta I, were all called *Kumaramatyas*. They served directly under emperors. This term does not indicate a minister to a prince or an heir-apparent. *Kumaramatyas* are often seen to be working as district officers, and sometimes as subordinates of even *Mahadandanayakas*. The post of *Mahabaladhikrita* or a *Mahadandanayaka* was no doubt a higher one than that of a *Kumaramatya*. It seems that *Kumaramatyas*, to a great extent, resembled the modern civil service working sometimes in the district, provincial or central secretariat and sometimes become members of the government itself. Higher posts of ministers and generals were filled by promotion from their cadre. The *Amatyas*, who figure under the Pallavas, were probably discharging functions similar to those of the *Kumaramatyas*.

Extent of Empire:

The Gupta empire comprised of Bengal, Bihar, the Uttara Pradesh, Eastern Panjab and portions of the Central Provinces, the whole of Central India including Malwa, North Gujarat and Kathiawar which included the thriving ports of Cambay, Ghogha, Veraval, Porbunder and Dvaraka.

Provincial Administration:

Records show that provincial nomenclature and extent varied with the different regions. The Gupta Empire was at first divided

into provinces like Saurashtra and Malwa. They were probably known as *Deshas*. Viceroys of provinces were appointed by the emperor and were responsible for protecting their territories against external invasion and maintaining internal order. They were to help and watch over the feudatory rulers. They were to develop their provinces by constructing or repairing works of public utility like irrigation tanks, promoting good government and public confidence. Almost all the departments that existed at the imperial capital probably had their replicas in the provincial headquarters.

Provinces were divided into *Bhuktis* which were about the size of the Commissioner's divisions in modern times. *Bhuktis* were sub-divided into *Vishayas*, roughly corresponding to a modern district. The *Bhuktis* were in charge of officers known as *Uparikas*, who were appointed by, and responsible to the emperor himself. *Vishayas* were governed by *Vishayapatis*, who were usually appointed by the *Uparikas*, but sometimes directly by the emperor himself.

The District Council and Administration:

It was presided over by an officer of the Central Government, who was usually called a *Vishayapati*. He often belonged to the cadre of the *Kumaramatyas*. His office was well organised and used to keep careful records and files. The officers in charge of records was called *Pustapala*, his records could show the correct dimensions of land, both cultivated and uncultivated, situated within the district. His subordinates were called *Akshapatalikas*.

There was no over-centralisation of government under the Guptas. The district administration enjoyed considerable powers. When waste lands owned by the Central government were to be sold, the district authorities had to be consulted.

The popular element had a large voice in the district administration. The chief banker, the chief trader, the chief artisan and the chief *Kayastha* (writer) figured prominently in the council. The members of this council were known as *Vishayamahattaras*. There were other members also. The Faridpur Plate III shows that there were about 20 members, some of whom were non-Brahmanas. Seals of *Vishayamahattaras* have also been found at Nalanda.

Officers in charge of districts were responsible for maintaining law and order and collecting government taxes and revenue. They were assisted by a large staff. *Yuktas*, *Ayuktas*, *Niyuktas*, *Vyaprilas* and *Adhikritas*, who figure in some of our records were perhaps subordinate revenue officers serving as link between the district administration and the village. The district administration was in charge of waste lands. Very likely the forest officers worked under the guidance of the district officers. *Dandanayakas* whose seals are found in large numbers at Bhita, were probably the captains of military units, to help the local authorities in maintaining law and order. *Dandapashikas* or *Choroddharanikas*, who figure in the records of northern dynasties were obviously the police and C. I .D. Officers, appointed to apprehend criminals and to haul them before the law courts. Chatas and Bhatas were policemen working under their direction. Administration of justice in important towns and cities was carried on by specially appointed officers with the assistance of jurors trained in law. The seals of the office of *Nayadhikarana*, *Dharmadhikarana* and *Dharmashasanadhikarana*, (found at Nalanda and Vaishali) were obviously the seals of courts of justice functioning at important provincial and district centres.

Popular Courts:

Popular courts of the times were the *Panchayats* in towns and villages. All disputes were referred to these courts in the first instance and their decrees were enforced by the state. There was permission to appeal to higher courts. Guilds and caravans had their own courts. Such a decentralisation did not cause congestion and it afforded the public an opportunity to compose their differences among themselves.

Village and Town Administration:

Machinery of the government of the village was the pivot of administration. The jurisdiction of the village authorities extended over houses, streets, bazars, burning grounds, temples, wells, tanks, waste-lands, forests and cultivable lands. All lands cultivated and uncultivated were very carefully measured by officers known as

Simakaras, as becomes clear from the data supplied in inscriptions. Village settlements were usually protected by walls and ditches. Agriculture was the main occupation of the villages, but each of them had usually its own compliment of weavers, potters, carpenters, oil men, blacksmiths and cobblers. The headman, designated as *Grameyaka* in some places and *Gramadhyaksha* in others, was at the head of the village administration. He was assisted in his work by a non-official local council, known as *Panchmandali* in Central India and *Gramajanapada* in Bihar.

The village council discharged almost all the functions of the government. It looked after village defence, settled village disputes, organised works of public utility, acted as a trustee for minors, and collected revenue. A large number of the seals of the village *janapadas* were found at Nalanda belonging to the later Gupta period. They show that the popular village councils in Bihar were known as *janapadas*: and that they met regularly. We have no information as to how the members of the village councils were elected or selected. Senior persons, acquired a pre-eminent status by their age, experience and character, and were elected to the village council by general approval.

The town administration was carried on by an officer known as *Purapala*. He had often the status of a *Kumaramatya*. If the town or the city happened to be the headquarters of a district, the council of the *Vishayamahattaras* probably carried on its administration along with that of the district. When such was not the case, we can reasonably assume that the towns, like the villages, had their own popular councils, which assisted the town prefect in administration. Town councils used to discharge most of the functions of the village councils. Citizens were naturally particular that their towns should have good water supply, fine gardens, imposing temples and spacious halls for public meetings and town councils had to take the necessary steps to provide these and other amenities. Most of the towns and cities were protected by walls.

We have no information about the sources of revenue of the village and town councils. Very probably an appreciable percentage of the land revenue was handed over to them by the central government. It is also likely that the local bodies imposed taxes

on shops and houses and obtained a fair portion of the octroi duties in their jurisdiction, which were mostly collected in kind.

Taxation:

It appears that the traditional number of taxes was 18, but all their names are nowhere given. Among them, the land tax, of course, was the most important. It was called *Bhagakara* in some localities and *Udranga* in others and its incidence seems to have varied from 16 to 25 per cent according to the quality of the land. It was usually collected in kind as the term *Bhagakara* clearly suggests and so the question of granting remissions for failure of crops to some extent solved itself. If the yield was poor, the government share, which was a certain fraction of it, automatically became small.

Octroi duties mentioned both in the *Smritis* and inscriptions were important sources of revenue. Some of them were collected in kind and were assigned to the village and town officers as a part of their remuneration. These seem to be referred to as *Bhagakaras*. Vakataka and Pallava inscriptions refer to the tax on flowers, milk, curds and bullocks. Most probably excise duties were imposed on articles manufactured in the kingdom; the expression *Bhuta-pratyaya*, 'tax on what has come into existence', which occurs in some Maitraka and Traikutaka records, probably refers to them.

The state claimed ownership in waste lands, forests, pastures and salt-mines, and derived considerable income by farming them out or selling their produce.

The villagers and citizens had to pay occasional levy when officers of the central government came for inspection. They had to provide them, free of cost, with boiled rice, curds, milk, vegetables, grass, fuel, flowers and other necessities and luxuries of life, and supply labour, bulls and carts necessary for their transport. Where police and military officers had to visit a locality to detect crime or apprehend criminals, their expenses had to be met by the local residents; holders of the *brahmadeya* grants were in many cases exempt from such imposts.

Fa-hien's Account:

We have a glimpse of general characteristics and tendencies

of the Gupta imperial administration in the valuable, though brief account of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien, who visited northern India during the reign of Chandragupta II. We learn from him how the strong arm of the Guptas was sufficient to establish such peace and order throughout the 'Middle Kingdom', that a solitary pilgrim from abroad had no reason to complain of molestation by robbers. It was the imperishable glory of these emperors that they gave their subjects the benefits of "Gupta Peace" without having recourse to harsh methods of police control and criminal justice that had disfigured previous administrations, e.g., the administration of the Mauryas. Introducing his account of "The Middle Kingdom", Fa-hien observes:

> "People have not to register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules.... If they want to go they go, if they want to stay, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishment. Criminals are simply fined lightly or heavily according to the circumstances of each case."

When we remember the immemorial tradition of espionage and of deterrent punishments for crimes, we cannot but regard the administration of the Guptas as making a new era of humanitarian reform in the penal law of ancient India. Fa-hien further observes: "The king's bodyguards and attendants all have regular salaries." This proves that they followed the wise policy of the Mauryas in paying fixed salaries to their troops. The result of the beneficient administration of the Gupta emperors was revealed in the prosperous condition of the people under their rule; it promoted and elevated moral and material standard.

Social and Economic Life:

The account of social life given by Fa-hien is very informative. He was in India from 401 to 410 A.D. During these ten years, he visited Taxila, Peshawar, Pataliputra and Tamralipti, an ancient port in Bengal. He spent two years at Tamralipti and three years at Pataliputra. His main interest was to collect authentic text of *Vinaya-Pitaka* and to visit all the holy places of Buddhism. Though his narrative contains more details about Buddhist relics, and their

holy places, it has valuable information about society in general. His account tallies with the inscriptional evidence.

The government of the Guptas, says Fa-hien, was lenient. Taxes varied according to the wealth of the regions. People were free to move about. Capital punishment was rare; the mutilation of limbs was meant for rebels and fines were the usual punishment. Soldiers and officials received regular salary and corruption was absent. Fa-hien was never troubled during his wanderings even though he had with him many valuable paintings and manuscripts. Therefore, he records that public morality was high. As a staunch Buddhist, Fa-hien was very much pleased with the habits of the people who "do not kill animals, and do not drink wine or eat onions or garlic; there are neither butchers' shops nor taverns in the market place." Obviously this statement is too generous to be true. While admitting the strong influence of *Ahimsa* and *Dharma*, it is difficult to accept that the people as a whole abandoned killing or drinking. It may be that the tavern or butcher's shop was located in a separate quarter specially meant for the purpose. *Chandalas*, Fa-hien admits, did drink and eat meat. But they were looked down upon and kept outside the towns. The *Smritis* of the time prescribe meat-eating at *Sraddha*. "Drinking was also in use, imported drinks among the rich and indigenous drinks among the poor."

Again, in spite of the laws of Manu, caste-system was still fluid. Marriages with foreigners and inter-caste marriages were common. Yajnavalkya allows a person of the higher caste to eat with farmer, barber, milkman and family friend, even if they be *Shudras*. Professions were not rigidly restricted to caste. Gupta-rulers themselves were *Vaishyas*. *Brahmanas* took to trade, agriculture and even to war. Brahmana dynasties of rulers were established, not to speak of officers and commanders. Kshatriyas also took to trade. A guild of oil-men had officers who were specially described as Kshatriyas. Shudras were traders, agriculturists and artisans. This change was allowed by the *Smritis* of the time. Slavery existed, but slaves received humane treatment.

Joint family was still the rule. However, the *Smritis* contained rules for the division of property — all sons getting equal

share of the family property. Widows got a life-interest or maintenance, from the family. Women were free in social life. But their *Upanayana* (initiation into Vedic studies) was stopped. The age of marriage was lowered and *Sati* was rare. Admission of women to the Buddhist monasteries was stopped by 500 A.D.

The dress of the people changed owing to the influence of the foreigners. Coats, overcoats, and trousers became common among the kings and the noblemen. Still *dhoti* and the traditional head-dress continued to be common. A wide variety of graceful ornaments are seen in the paintings and sculpture of this age. Both men and women were fond of ornaments. Several styles of hair-dressing and the use of paints, pastes and lipsticks as well, are depicted in the paintings at Ajanta.

Water-clocks were in use. Games like chess and dice and sports like hunting, ram-fight and bull-fight were common *Kanduka* (ball) was popular among women and children. Festivals, shows, fairs and dramas were the common means of recreation.

Guilds (*shreni*) became well-organised during this period. Some guilds combined banking operations to provide capital for their members. A president and an executive council managed the affairs of a guild. Numerous seals of various guilds have been found and they testify to the popularity of this organisation and its effectiveness. The guilds were very powerful in social and economic life. They were represented on the advisory bodies attached to the distinct administration. They could even raise a protective police force of their own. They lavishly donated to the charitable institutions, built monasteries, *Chaityas* and temples, and promoted education and arts. The prosperity of the country rested on the efficiency and generosity of the guilds. Foreign trade flourished and Indians frequented several Roman towns. A Hindu temple was built by the Indian colony of the Upper Euphrates Valley. Large ships carrying as many as five hundred men were employed in the trade with the Far East.

Education and Literature:

Primary education must have still continued in the families while the vocational training was given by the guilds and the

artisans. Weaving, metal work, carpentry, sculpture, construction, etc., of the Gupta period were of a high standard. It is amply proved by the monuments of this period, such as monolithic columns, sculpture, paintings, coins and inscriptions. The celebrated iron pillar at Delhi is in fact a miracle of metallurgy.

Generous donations from princes and rich merchants promoted higher education. Scholars were devoted to teaching and learning. Every *agrahar* even as every monastery, was a seat of learning and no distinction was between Hindu and Buddhist teachings. Fa-hien records that rich and populous monasteries were scattered over the country. In Mathura alone, there were 30 monasteries with 3,000 students. Varanashi, Nasik and Kanchi were other centres of learning. Dharmapala, the head of the Nalanda University, was educated at Kanchi. Valabhi was another rising University, Taxila was on the decline. Instruction in the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Smritis*, grammar, literature, logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine was given at the Universities in the traditional manner.

Sanskrit attained an eminent position during this period. It became the single common language of scholars all over India. Gupta kings and Shaka Rudradaman used it for their inscriptions, coins, official announcements and records of gifts. The *Mahayana* Buddhists accepted it for their sacred writings. Thus, there was a rich harvest of valuable works in Sanskrit during this period.

All the Gupta emperors were scholars and patrons of learning. Samudragupta was a poet and an artist. Chandragupta maintained a magnificent court with the "Nine gems." Kalidasa the great poet and dramatist of India adorned his court. His dramas — *Malavikagnimitram*, *Vikramorvashiyam* and *Shakuntala*, are world-famous. So also his poetical works — *Raghuvamsha*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Ritusamhara* and *Meghaduta* are of rare merit.

"Vivid portraiture, compact and elegant expression and an ardent love of nature mark his poems and dramas. Indian literary criticism has applauded him rightly for the aptness of the numerous similies employed by him."

Bhasa, who is placed in the early part of the 4th century, was certainly a greater dramatist than Kalidasa. Fourteen plays ascribed to him have been discovered hitherto. Famous from among those are: the *Urubhanga*, the *Pratima Nataka*, the *Pratijna-yaugandharayana* and the *Svapnavasavadatta*. As Krishna Chaitanya rightly observes:

> "Kalidas achieved supreme perfection in poetic drama. But considering the variety of output and the infalliable judgement regarding what would be effective on the stage, Bhasa cannot be denied his position as the greatest dramatist in the Indian tradition."

Shudraka's *Mrichchakatikam* (the clay cart) and Vishakha-datta's *Mudrarakshasam*, have attained universal fame. Bharavi's epic poem, *Kiratarjuniya* dealing with an episode from the *Mahabharata*, is known for its meaningful language (*arthagaurava*). Bhatti in his *Bhattikavya* or *Ravanavadha* narrates the story of Rama. An interesting feature of this poem is the illustration of the rules of grammar in the poem itself. Such effort to make the study of language and sciences both easy and interesting have been found in good number throughout the ancient period. Bhartrihari wrote his trio of *Shatakas* (a hundred verses), on *Niti* (polity), *Shringara* (romance) and *Vairagya* (renunciation). Harishena of the Allahabad *prashasti*, Vatsabhatti of Mandasor *prashasti*, Vasula, Bandhuvarman and Kubja are some of the eminent composers of the inscriptions that have attained literary fame.

The *Smritis* of Yajnavalkya, Narada, Katyayana and Brihaspati are assigned to this period. Kamandaka's *Nitisara* written during this period is a summary of the *Arthashastra*. Some *Puranas* received final touch during this age. Chandragomin and Amarasinha, two Buddhist scholars, wrote respectively a grammar, *Chandra Vyakarana* and *Amarakosha*, a popular lexicon. Aryabhatta was the greatest scientist of the time. His contribution to mathematics, astronomy and astrology is recognised as both original and outstanding. His explanation of the cause of eclipses, methods of calculating them precisely, and the rotation of the earth round its axis, are still acceptable. Varahamihira was another great mathematician and astronomer. *Panchasiddhantika*,

Brihajjataka and *Laghujataka* are his works on astronomy and his *Brihatsamhita* is a *cyclopaedia* of various sciences. *Ashtanga-sangraha* of Vagbhata, *Hatsyayurveda* of Palakapaya and an anonymous manual of recipes are works on medicine for men and elephants.

Shabaraswami's *Bhashya* on the *Mimamsasutras*, *Sankhya-karika* and *Vyasabhashya* of Samkhya, and *Nyayabhashya* of Vatsyayana belong to this period. The *Bhashya* of Prashastipada on *Vaisheshikasutra* came a bit later. Thus philosophy has had its share of the Gupta glory.

Buddhaghosha, Buddhadatta and Vasubandhu are the famous *Hinayana* scholars of this age, while Asanga Vasubandhu and Dingnaga belong to the *Mahayana* school. The councils of the Jaina scholars were held in Mathura and Valabhi, and new commentaries — *Niryuktis* and *Chunis* were written by different scholars. Of them *Tattvartha-dhigama-Sutra* of Umasvati and *Nyayavatara* of Siddhasena are important.

RELIGION :

As in other spheres, the Gupta period achieved glory in that of religion also. The leading trend of all the three sects — Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism — was to gain increasing popularity. All of them adopted pomp and display in daily worship. Temples, Chaityas, Jinalayas, *Yatras* and festivals became common to all. Jainas seemed to be a bit conservative in the beginning. But "in organising religious festivals and the education of the people by the exposition of epics and *Puranas* in temples and other public places," says Prof. Nilakantha Shastri, "Hinduism, thought at the start it might have begun by taking after Buddhist models, soon outstripped them and achieved great success in capturing the imagination of the country. Even the colourful features of *Mahayana* could not hold their own against the new developments in Hinduism."

Hindu temples are a unique feature of the Indian civilization. Essentially a place of worship, the temple is a centre of social, religious and cultural activities, such as civic meetings, religious and philosophical discussions, recitations, introduction of new

literary compositions, exhibition of the individual achievements in fine arts like music, dancing and painting, education, festivals and feasts, and the like.

Another noteworthy feature of the age is the remarkable spirit of tolerance and harmony among the followers of the three faiths. The Gupta rulers were known for their liberal religious policy. They patronised all faiths equally. They were staunch devotees of Hindu gods; Samadragupta performed *Ashvamedha* sacrifice; Chandragupta II glorified in the title "*Param-Bhagavata*". But they appointed Buddhists and Shaivites to high offices. The people in general respected all the faiths. Kings and the rich usually donated to faiths other than the one to which they belonged. This was typical of the age which still retained the spirit of Ashoka's teachings, who had declared in one of his edicts: "All faiths deserve reverence for one reason or another. Acting thus a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people." Probably *Brahmanisation* of Buddha also started with the *Mahayana* movement, which made him *Avalokiteshvara*. Shiva and Vishnu were the most popular deities next to Shakti, the Mother Goddess. In addition, *Yakshas* and *Nagas* were worshipped, as also the tree and the water. Pilgrimages, religious fasts, *samskaras* and prayers became prominent in the religious life of the people.

Buddhism was popular in Kashmir, Afghanistan and Panjab. Mathura, Bodha-Gaya, Saranath, Paharpur, Ajanta, Kanchi and Nalanda were other prominent places of the Buddhists. Cave temples in the Western Ghats and other places indicate the general support of the people to Buddhism. The Buddhist monasteries usually received help and respect from all sections.

Art and Architecture:

Most of the temples and *stupas* of the Gupta period have been destroyed; but the few that have survived show remarkable features. Free from the *Gandhara* influence, the Gupta architecture introduced new themes and perfected its technique. The Epics and the Puranas provided a wide variety of themes and the art achieved fresh heights. Some of the Gupta temples were

built of bricks — particularly those in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The temple at Bhitargaon (Kanpur) is an example of Gupta architecture. "The temple has a pyramidal roof and its walls are decorated outside with terracotta panels representing mythological scenes." The Dashavatara temple at Deorgarh was a fine specimen of stone-temple with a *shikhara* of about 40 feet high. The *Stupas* at Rajgir and Saranath belong to this period. The caves of Ajanta, Nasik, Karli, Mogulrajepuram and Undavalli are the examples of the rock-architecture.

Gupta painting is represented by the excellent specimens at Ajanta and other caves. They tell us several things about the greatness of the people who have preserved them for future generations. The high standard of work indicates a long tradition of art, a rich cultural background, as well as, royal patronage. Only in an atmosphere of the highest culture, such an art can develop. The caves were selected for religious purposes, as also for the safety of the valuable work. They knew that their art was worth preserving. The artists must have worked for months together in dim light. Their devotion to art and religion was really great. The colours they have used reveal their knowledge of chemistry. Really, the people of the Deccan deserve special praise for all these good qualities. Royal patronage alone is not enough for the development of art and culture. Deep devotion, tenacity, suitable cultural atmosphere and great constructive ability, all are required. Art is, surely, the combination of beauty and virtue.

The narrative paintings at Ajanta reveal several aspects of contemporary life and depict charming and delicate scenes of home and palace life, toilet and sports, festivities and processions.

"On the hundred walls and pillars of those rock-carved temples, a vast drama moves before our eyes; a drama played by princes and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against a marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plains and in deep jungles, while above, the messengers from heaven move swiftly in the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world, in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the loveliness and purity of birds and flowers; and woven into this

fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of the spiritual values of the universe."

So also, the iron pillar at Delhi and the eight feet copper image of Buddha reveal their skill in metallurgy. The seated Buddha of Saranath and standing Buddha of Mathura are two other outstanding examples of sculpture. The Varaha at Udayagiri, Vishnu from Mathura, and the Deoghar temple are examples of Hindu sculpture.

"We must note lastly that art was introduced into the daily life of the common man by the mass production from moulds of well-modelled terracotta plaques and figurines which served to decorate house fronts and the interior, and provided toys for children. Terracotta was also the material for almost life-size sculptures of deities in brick temples, and their baking no doubt presented technical problems of some difficulty, successfully tackled by the potters of the age." (K. A. N. Shastri).

THE COINS:

The coins of the Gupta emperors are considered as important sources of history. Firstly they reveal their perfect art of coinage. Secondly they testify to the prosperity of India of the Gupta age. Thirdly they help in establishing the extent of the Gupta empire and the area of Gupta influence. Fourthly they furnish several historical facts of great importance. And finally, they reveal the personal accomplishments and achievements of the emperors. The Gupta coins, thus, are valuable sources of historical information. They supplement the material available from other sources and in some cases, clarify confusing issues.

Chandragupta I issued his coins with the figure of his queen Kumaradevi — the Lichchavi princess, carved by the side of his own portrait. The relation between Guptas and the Lichchavis and the support of the Lichchavis in building the Gupta empire are hinted by these coins. The fact that Kumaradevi belonged to the Lichchavi clan is specially inscribed on the coins.

Samudragupta brought into circulation, gold coins of several types. The important ones are: the archer, lion slayer, lyrist, battle-axe, and the sacrifice-horse. These reveal his military strength, religious views and the artistic achievements. His coin-

inscriptions like "the invincible one," "the Lord of the earth," "the grandson of the Lichchavis," "*Kaviraja*," speak about his accomplishments.

Chandragupta II continued all the types and added a few more. The Goddess *Lakshmi* with her lotus-seat was carved on the gold coins. In another coin the king with his umbrella is shown to signify his authority.

Kumaragupta I continued all these coins. He issued new coins with the figure of Kartikeya riding his peacock and that of the king feeding the peacock. Several new designs with the horseman, sacrificial horse, archer, Lakshmi, etc., were also introduced. Skandagupta introduced the 'Lakshmi and the king' type, in which he is shown as being garlanded by the Goddess of Prosperity. This type of coin was issued after his victory over the barbarian Hunas.

There were silver coins, with the figure of *Garuda*, the sacred bird carrying God Vishnu. Copper coins of nine varieties were found.

An appreciation :

This brief review of the civilization of the Gupta period is sufficient to justify its well-known epithet, "the Golden age of the Guptas". An eminent historian brilliantly sums up the achievements of this period in all spheres of life :—

> This period saw the high water mark of Hindu culture, in the days of the great Gupta empire, when India seems to have achieved that perfect balance between a sincere and humane religious outlook and an urbane and often sensuous secular one which produced the works of Kalidasa and the finest murals of Ajanta. This is indeed a period of which every Indian should be proud, when, while Rome was tottering to her fall under the blows of the barbarians, India enjoyed her happiest and most creative period. This was an age when for at least a century, between the conquests of Samudra Gupta and the incursions of the Hunas, peace prevailed throughout the Gangetic Valley, when the Chinese pilgrim was amazed at the mildness of the imperial administration, when guilds of merchants endowed temples not only for purely religious motives, but also with the wish to make their cities more beautiful, when even little towns far from the great centres of culture possessed able

poets, ready to turn out beautiful Sanskrit verses on demand, when city governors were proud to record the fact that they were on warm and friendly terms with the citizens whom they controlled, when smiths were capable of handling large masses of iron with a proficiency which no ancient or mediaeval craftsmen could imitate, when mighty emperors thought their skill in music as worthy of commemoration as their triumphs in battle, when sculptors and painters produced works of the utmost spirituality, and when sexual love was developed as a fine art.

Perhaps the Gupta period was an age when love, in all the senses of the word, was more widely diffused in India than at any other time in her history — love of the gods and love of one's fellow men, love of the things of the spirit and love of the things of sense, love of pomp and splendour and love of simplicity, love of nature, and love of life. In almost every relic of the Gupta age this love is apparent, in the simple but dignified script of Gupta inscriptions, in the fine design of Gupta coinage, in the words of the court poet Kalidasa as in those of the provincial hack-writer Vatsabhatti and of the anonymous scribes who drafted in rather inaccurate Sanskrit the texts of the Damodarpur title-deeds, taking pains to mention the names of the members of the local council and those of the humble clerks who kept the records of land transactions. This was surely a period of high civilization in every sense, but especially in the truest sense of the term — an age of equilibrium, when human relations reached a degree of kindliness rare in the hitory of the world, and the best minds of India expressed the fullness and goodness of life in imperishable art and literature. (A. L. Basham).

SUMMARY

THE NAGAS (c.200 TO 300 A.D.):

Mentioned in the *Puranas*, the Nagas were the first to revive Hindu rule. Navanaga, their founder originally from Gwalior region, moved and settled in Nagpur. Virasena was the most important ruler of this line. The last ruler, Bhavanaga concluded a marriage alliance with the Vakataka family who inherited the Naga kingdom after the death of Bhavanaga.

Revival of Vedic rites and development of the Devanagari script are their great achievements.

THE VAKATAKAS (c.250 TO 500 A.D.):

Founded by Vindhyashakti, the Vakataka kingdom was expanded by *Samrat* Pravarasena I, who ruled for about 60 years. Rudrasena inherited the Naga kingdom and his son, Prithvisena extended it to Karnataka. Rudrasena II married Prabhavati, daughter of Chandragupta Vikramaditya of the Gupta family. The Vakatakas were in power till 500 A.D. and ruled

over an extensive area comprising Avanti, Kalinga, Trikuta, Andhra and parts of Maharashtra.

They revived the Vedic rites, and patronised learning, literature and fine arts. The paintings in some caves of Ajanta belong to this period.

THE GUPTAS (320 A.D. TO 468 A.D.):

Chandragupta I married Kumaradevi of the Lichchavis who helped him to extend his kingdom and the foundation of the Gupta empire.

Samudragupta was a great conqueror who established the supremacy of the Guptas over a wide area — from Kashmir to the Kaveri in the south. He was a lover of culture and patronised learning and arts. The Allahabad pillar inscription records his achievements.

Chandragupta II defeated the Shakas and further extended the Gupta empire. He was the most glorious ruler whose court was proud of the nine gems like Kalidasa, Amarasinha, and others. He concluded marriage alliances with the Vakatakas and the Kadambas.

Kumaragupta ruled for 40 years in peace and prosperity. Inscriptions record that the Gupta glory reached its zenith during this period. His son Skandagupta repelled the Hunas but died early. After him, the Gupta glory declined.

With the divided empire, the military strength of the Guptas also declined. The Hunas began to pour into the North-West and they would not be checked by the weak successors of Skandagupta. The Hunas established their rule as early as 484 A.D. under Toramana. The Huna invasion was an effective cause of the break up of the Gupta empire. Taking advantage of the political chaos, several small independent states rose to power.

CIVILIZATION:

THE AGE:

Though the period is popularly known as the Golden Age of the Guptas, it is accurate to call it as the Vakataka-Gupta age as the achievements of the Vakatakas contributed equally to the glory of the period. It was an age of unity, strength and prosperity.

ADMINISTRATION:

Though all powers were centralised in the king, he was not an absolute ruler. He had to share his authority with the other members of the royal family, ministers and officers. Local bodies enjoyed autonomy. The central government consisted of a council of ministers and a large body of officers. The provinces were ruled by Kumaras or governors selected from royal family. The administration of the district and the village was on traditional lines where there was large scope for popular control.

Government was not content merely with promoting material prosperity of its citizens: it tried to promote their moral and spiritual welfare also by appointing special religious inspectors. The state extended its patronage impartially to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Fa-hien, the Chinese pilgrim, has appreciated the Gupta administration. He found ample freedom for the people and arrangements to look after the poor, the orphans, the widows and the old.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE:

Fa-hien has recorded that the people were generally good and cultured. Marriages were concluded not only between people of different castes but also between Indians and foreigners. Caste-rules were not rigid. Joint families continued to exist. The *Smritis* provided rules for division of the property among sons and daughters. An idea of dress, ornaments and fashions of the age can be had from the paintings and sculptures of the period. Games like chess, dice, ball, were popular among the people. Hunting, ram-fights and bull-fights were their other pastimes.

The guilds weilded a considerable influence in social and economic life. They were represented on the advisory bodies to the district administration. They employed a police force of their own to protect themselves.

EDUCATION AND LITERATURE:

Primary education was given at home and vocational education by the guilds. Centres of higher education were Varanashi, Mathura, Nasik, Kanchi and Ujjain. Nalanda was also beginning to flourish along with the Valabhi university.

Sanskrit became the official language. Kalidasa, Bhasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta, Bharavi were the more noted among the literary figures of this age. Aryabhatta, Varahamihira, Vagbhata were the scientists while Yajnavalkya, Narada, Katyayana were law-givers. Valuable contributions to Vedic and Buddhist philosophies were made during the period.

RELIGION:

Hindus, Jainas and Buddhists lived in complete harmony. Temples, festivals, pilgrimages and charity became the prominent features of all these faiths. The Epics and the *Puranas* became popular.

Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti were popular deities. In addition, the tree, the river, the serpent etc. were also worshipped.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

The temple of Bhitargaon, the cave paintings of Ajanta and the terracotta figures and designs are the specimens of the Gupta art.

THE COINS:

The coins of the Gupta Emperors reveal their progress in fine art, their prosperity, and other aspects of the Gupta achievements.

8

HARSHA ERA

THE HUNAS — YASHODHARMAN OF MALWA — THE MAITRAKAS OF VALABHI — LATER GUPTAS OF MAGADHA AND MALWA — THE MAUKHARIS — KINGDOM OF KANAUJ — HARSHAVARDHANA — CIVILIZATION

THE HUNAS:

THE Gupta empire began to disintegrate after the death of Skandagupta in 468 A.D. The dynasty was divided and the weakened successors could not resist the invading Hunas. The Hunas settled in and ruled over a portion of North-Western India. Even though their rule was brief, the effects of their invasion were disastrous. Taking advantage of the political chaos in the country, some rulers established their independent kingdoms. From the downfall of the Gupta Empire to the rise of Harshavardhana in 607 A.D., India was broken up into a number of small states.

The history of this period is not clear; the epigraphical evidence is available in fragments; the names of the dynasties and exact mutual relations of the kings are not known. The rulers of Magadha and Malwa, have their names ending in 'Gupta'. They are, therefore, Guptas, but their relations with the earlier Imperial

Guptas is not known. Yashodharman of Malwa stands out alone without a dynasty and without a date. Some details are known about other dynasties. By the end of the 6th century A.D., a wealth of historical information about Harshavardhana and his rule is available. Yuan Chwang visited India and his records are valuable for the history of this period.

The Deccan and the South, after the fall of the Shatavahanas were divided into a number of states. Their history is reviewed in separate chapters.

The Hunas are described as fierce barbarian tribes from Eastern Asia. They poured into Europe by the 2nd century B.C. and destroyed the Roman Empire. Another branch settled on the banks of the Oxus and dominated the Persian empire. After securing hold in Afghanistan and Kabul, about 458 A.D., they invaded India. Skandagupta was strong enough to resist the first influx and force them back. But the Guptas were unwise in leaving their frontiers, especially the passes of the Hindukush unguarded. When the Hunas swarmed like locusts in large numbers, the successors of Skandagupta were unable to defend the frontiers.

By 466-67 A.D. the Hunas conquered a portion of the Gupta empire. Tormana, the Huna-chief set up his kingdom in the north-western portion of the Gupta empire. He was strengthened by another wave of Huna invasion by 484 A.D. From the coins and inscriptions it appears that his kingdom extended over the Panjab, Rajputana and some parts of Central India. He exercised suzerainty over a number of kings. He assumed the title of *Maharajadhiraja*, and ruled upto 510-11 A.D.

Tormana was succeeded by his son, Mihiragula who is described as a ruthless tyrant. The Christian monk Cosmos called him an oppressor of his people. Kalhana says that he was a bloodthirsty king who rejoiced in rolling the elephants down a precipice. Such a wicked ruler could not be tolerated for long, Baladitya Gupta and Yashodharman of Malwa organised an attack on Mihiragula and succeeded in defeating him. But the defeated Huna was allowed to go alive. He went to Kashmir where he

gained the throne by some treacherous means. But he died shortly by 540 A.D.

Two inscriptions of Mihiragula are found. One speaks of the construction of a sun-temple, while the other about a Buddhist monastery. His coins bear the figures of Lakshmi, the bull and the Shiva. The Hunas, by this time, had been completely Indianised.

The power of the Hunas lingered on but their prestige ended with Mihiragula. Even though the dynasty was short-lived and the kingdom was not vast, the Huna conquest of India has had some far-reaching effects. The political unity achieved by the efforts of the Gupta emperors, was destroyed. A period of confusion started and a number of small kingdoms rose to independence. The progress of culture and civilization was hindered. The development of literary studies, scientific researches, creative efforts in the realm of arts and architecture — all these were halted for want of royal patronage and peace. The Buddhist monasteries and monuments were demolished. This was a death-blow to the religion of Buddha. Fine specimens of art and architecture were ruined. The Hunas were absorbed in the Hindu society and according to some scholars, these later on formed the Rajputs. In this way, a great transformation came over all aspects of Indian life, due to the Huna invasions.

YASHODHARMAN OF MALWA:

The Mandsor inscription records that the Huna King Mihiragula was subdued by Yashodharman of Malwa. The inscription says that Mihiragula was a powerful king, a devotee of Shiva and his capital was in the Himalayan region. We know from the Buddhist records that the Huna capital was Sakala (Sialkot) in the Panjab and that Mihiragula later ruled over Kashmir, as mentioned by Kalhana. The Huna king came into conflict with the Malawa ruler, Yashodharman when he tried to expand his empire in that direction. Another inscription contains the summary of the exploits of Yashodharman but does not mention Mihiragula. The first one is undated and the second one is

dated 532 A.D. Both are inscribed by one scholar, Govinda. Therefore, the date of the first inscription and also of the battle between Yashodharman and Mihiragula must be close to this date. The Huna king was thus engaged in two battles — one with Baladitya Gupta, and the other with Yashodharman of Malwa. Some scholars hold the view that there was the combined effort of these two rulers against the Huna, and a single battle was fought. There is as yet no clear evidence to decide one way or the other.

Yashodharman, according to the inscriptions, was a *Janendra*, probably an elected tribal chief. This must be the reason why his dynasty was not mentioned in the inscription. The exact period of his rule is not known. But he must have ruled for a long time to have acquired a vast empire. The inscription says that Yashodharman was the emperor of a vast territory from the Himalayas to Mahendra (Eastern Ghats) in the South, and from the Brahmaputra to the Western Sea. His capital was Mandasor. This extent of the empire seems to be just a conventional one used by all court poets. But the language of the inscription is unconventional and does not, therefore, seem to be just a repetition of the conventional phrases. He is said to have mastered the countries, not conquered even by the Guptas and the Hunas. Even allowing for exaggeration, Yashodharman still remains an impressive figure; nevertheless, a profound mystery of ancient India.

THE MAITRAKAS OF VALABHI:

The dynasty of the Maitrakas was founded by Bhattaraka, the chief *Senapati* of the Guptas. According to a few copper plates, the origin of this dynasty is dated about the end of the 5th century A.D. Its rule continued a little beyond the end of the 8th century. The founder Bhattaraka and his son, Dharmasena I called themselves *Senapatis*. Probably they owed some formal allegiance to the lingering Gupta rulers. But all their successors describe themselves as *Maharajas*. They seem to have achieved considerable importance during the 6th and 7th centuries. Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang) visited their capital Vala-

bhi in Saurashtra (Wala, near Bhavnagar). According to him, the ruler's name was Dhruvabhatta who is identified as Dhruvasena II of the copper plates. Dhruvasena was a sincere Buddhist but of ill-temper and little depth. He was the son-in-law of the great Harsha of Kanauj. Dhruvasena was one of the kings who attended the great Prayag Assembly convened by Harsha.

Dharasena IV, son and successor of Dhruvasena assumed very impressive titles of *Paramabhattaraka, Maharajadhiraja, Parameshvara* and *Chakravartin*. He conquered Gujarat (649 A.D.). Much is not known about the successors of Dharasena IV. The dynasty seems to have continued until it was destroyed by the Arabs who occupied Sind for a time.

The glory of the Maitrakas was short-lived. But they are remembered for their patronage of learning and culture. Valabhi, the capital of the Maitrakas, was an important centre of trade and commerce. Dr. Altekar says that Valabhi was "a port of international trade with numerous ware-houses full of rarest merchandise." During the 8th century A.D., Dharasena IV conquered Bhrigukachcha (Broach) and added it to his territory. This city was a famous centre of trade and commerce. The prosperity of the country was greatly increased by the flourishing trade which created conditions favourable for the progress of learning and culture. Yuan Chwang described the king Dhruvasena II as a sincere Buddhist. But all others were Shaivites who followed a liberal policy in respect of religion. The writings of I-Tsing, another Chinese traveller and the inscriptions reveal that Valabhi was a great seat of higher education, perhaps, as big as Nalanda. *Kathasaritsagar* records that *Brahmana* students from the distant Ganga Valley went to Valabhi for higher education. Gunamati and Sthiramati were two leading Buddhist scholars who received special grants. I-Tsing expresses a high opinion of the Valabhi University. The graduates of Valabhi were given preference in state-employment and were respected everywhere. The range of the subjects taught there was wide. According to the writings of the Chinese pilgrim, scholars from various parts of the country stayed at Valabhi to discuss "possible and impossible doctrines." Dr. Altekar states that the University

received considerable help from the rich merchants and the Maitraka Kings who were generous patrons of learning.

LATER GUPTAS OF MAGADHA AND MALWA

Information about later Guptas is gleaned mainly from two inscriptions — (1) the Aphsad (Gaya) inscription of Adityasena; (2) the Deo-Baranark inscription of Jivitagupta. Harsha's inscription, Chalukya inscription and a few copper plates also give some details. These Guptas have absolutely no relation with the Imperial Guptas, except that both of them have names ending in 'Gupta' and that they ruled over Magadha. The Guptas rose to power slightly earlier than the Maukharis of Kanauj. The two dynasties were in constant struggle.

Very little is known about Krishnagupta, the founder and his two successors, Harshagupta and Jivitagupta. Kumaragupta, the fourth king, defeated Ishanavarman of Kanauj and extended the Magadha dominion upto Prayag. Sarvavarman, son of Ishanavarman killed Kumaragupta's son and annexed the Magadha kingdom to his own. Now we hear of Mahasenagupta, grandson of Kumaragupta as ruler of Malwa, where he must have migrated. His two sons — Kumaragupta and Madhavagupta were sent, according to Bana's *Harshacharita*, to Thanesvar to be companions to Harshavardhana. Adityavardhana of Thaneshvar married Mahasenagupta's sister. Thus Mahasenagupta with the help of the rulers of Thaneshvar recovered his kingdom and won a victory over Assam. While two of his sons went to Thaneshvar, the third Devagupta remained in Malwa. Harshavardhana's empire included Magadha which he entrusted to Madhavagupta — one of his boyhood companions. Thus actually two lines of the Guptas came into existence, one of Magadha and the other of Malwa. The Guptas of Magadha continued to prosper by their friendship with Harshavardhana. But the story of Malwa is different. The Gupta ruler of Malwa, Devagupta continued his hostile policy towards the Maukharis. He attacked Grahavarman of Kanauj and killed him. But Grahavarman had married Rajyashri, sister of Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana. Rajyavardhana marched on Malwa, killed Devagupta and annexed

the territory to his dominions. Thus the Malwa branch of the later Guptas ended abruptly.

After the break-up of Harsha's empire, Madhavagupta's son Adityasena succeeded him. He reconquered a vast area and recovered the glory of the old imperial Magadha. For the first time in his dynasty, Adityasena assumed the title of *Parambhattaraka, Maharajadhiraja* by about 672 A.D. He was followed by Devagupta, Vishnugupta and Jivitagupta. All these probably maintained the vast empire intact. A Chalukya inscription claims that Vinayaditya Chalukya of Vatapi (Badami) defeated the "*Sakalottarapathanatha*" (Lord of the entire North). This title of Harshavardhana was also used here, most probably to mean Devagupta of this line. However, Magadha was finally annexed by the Gauda Kings of Bengal in the 8th century.

THE MAUKHARIS:

A clay seal of the Mauryan period tells us that the original house of the Maukharis was South Bihar. They gradually migrated northwards. Three kings, Yajnavarman, Shardula and Anantavarman successively ruled but only as subordinates as their titles — *Samanta* and *Samantachudamani* — indicate.

Another line of the Maukharis, probably unrelated to this, is known to have ruled over Kanauj. This information is gleaned from the Ashirgad copper seal of Sarvavarman. Harivarman, the founder of this dynesty was a *Maharaja* whose fame had spread to the four oceans and who had defeated several kings. But no definite territory or details about his conquests are available. His son Adityavarman was also a *Maharaja* who married a princess of the later Gupta family of Magadha.

Ishvaravarman, son of Adityavarman, continued to be a *Maharaja*. The Jaunpur stone inscription gives vague hints about his victory over Yashodharman of Malwa, the Andhras of the Deccan and the invaders from Kathiawar or Saurashtra. He also married a princess from Magadha. These matrimonial alliances, however, did not prevent them from continuous fighting. The Ashirgad

copper inscription records that Ishvaravarman was a good and just ruler.

Ishanavarman succeeded his father Ishvaravarman. He adopted a more glorious title of *Maharajadhiraja.* He followed an aggressive expansionist policy. After defeating the Andhras, the Sulikas (Cholas) and the Goudas, he came in conflict with the later Guptas of Magadha. Kumaragupta successfully met Ishanavarman. The seals and coins of this ruler indicate that he was a learned person, a just ruler, a brave warrior and a patron of education. Sarvavarman, his son, defeated and killed Kumaragupta's son and thus avenged the defeat of his father .

Avantivarman is mentioned as the next Maukhari ruler. His son, Grahavarman, married Rajyashri of the Thaneshvar family. The Vardhanas had established themselves and their relation was respected by Avantivarman. But as narrated above the wicked king of Malwa killed Grahavarman and imprisoned Rajyashri. However, Grahavarman is the only ruler of the Maukhari dynasty mentioned in the *Harshacharita.* The kingdom of Kanauj was combined with that of Thaneshvar and the nucleus thus formed was developed into an Empire by Harshavardhana.

KINGDOM OF KANAUJ:

Of the kingdoms that rose to power after the disintegration of the Gupta empire, the kingdom of Thaneshvar is the most important one. It was extended to an empire covering the whole of North India and ushering in an era of unity, glory and prosperity once again.

At the beginning, the kingdom of Thaneshvar comprised a portion of the Panjab and its rulers tried to check the Hunas. The Maukharis of Kanauj and Guptas of Malwa joined hands with the rulers of Thaneshvar and thus with their support a powerful empire was built by Harshavardhana.

The '*Harshacharita*' of Bana and the writings of Hiuen Tsang are two important sources for the history of Harsha's family. The information is supported in some cases by inscriptions.

Naravardhana is described as the founder of this kingdom.

He ruled over a small kingdom and bore the title of *Maharaja*. His two successors — Rajyavardhana and Adityavardhana also had the same title. But the fourth king Prabhakarvardhana assumed the title of *Maharajadhiraja* and greatly extended the kingdom. He defeated, it appears, the Hunas as well as the rulers of Gujarat, Gandhar and Malwa. He was connected with the royal families of Magadha and Malwa. They helped him in his conquests.

Prabhakaravardhana had two sons. The elder Rajyavardhana came to the throne. But after a short period, he was killed in a battle with Sasanik of Gauda (Bengal). He was succeeded by Harshavardhana, his younger brother who was actually elected to the throne by the *Mantri-Parishad* (Council of Ministers).

HARSHAVARDHANA:

Harshavardhana was the second son of Prabhakaravardhana. As Rajyavardhana was killed in a battle with the kings of Malwa and Bengal, Harsha ascended the throne though unwillingly. Immediately he sent a great army to avenge his elder brother's death and to rescue his sister Rajyashri who was taken prisoner. He succeeded in both. Rajyashri was the widow of Grahavarman, of Kanauj. Now the two important kingdoms — Kanauj and Thaneshvar — were united under Harshavardhana.

According to Hiuen Tsang, Harsha's army comprised of 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 trained infantry. Chariots, it seems were not so important during this period.

Harsha extended his empire by conquests. He concluded an alliance with the King of Assam and with him divided the territory of Bengal. Most probably, Western Bengal and Orissa were annexed by Harsha. Devagupta of Eastern Malwa was defeated and his kingdom added to the empire. Dhruvasena II of Valabhi was defeated but his kingdom was returned when he accepted Harsha's suzerainty. Later on Dhruvasena married Harsha's daughter and thus good relations were maintained between the two.

Harsha then tried to invade the South; it was under the powerful Karnataka ruler Chalukya Pulakeshin II. He had defeated almost

all the states in the south and was an unrivalled master. He drove back Harsha in 620 A.D.

Harsha's empire according to Hiuen Tsang and Banabhatta, the author of *Harshacharita*, extended almost all over Northern India. United Provinces, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Central India and Rajputana were under his direct administration. Gujarat, Malwa, Sind, Frontier Provinces, Kashmir and Assam, had accepted his authority. Thus the whole of India was divided between the two great rulers, Harsha and Pulakeshin, with the Narmada as the boundary between them. Harsha deserved his title — *Sakalottarapathnatha* (the Lord of the entire North).

Harsha spent much of his reign in building up an administrative system suitable for his kingly ideals. He devoted himself to the welfare of his subjects. He encouraged religion — both Buddhism and Hinduism, art and literature. Thus he is one of the greatest rulers known for political conquests and for cultural progress as well.

Harshavardhana was in the beginning a devotee of Shiva. Probably owing to the influence of his sister Rajyashri and the Buddhist saint, Divakara Mitra, he accepted Buddhism. Later on, he changed over to *Mahayana* Buddhism under the influence of Hiuen Tsang. But he respected all religions and patronised them equally. Public worship of the Brahmanas and the gifts at Prayag amply prove this. He over-emphasized the doctrine of non-violence, like Ashoka. Free hospitals for men and animals were conducted by the state. Rest-houses (*Dharmashalas*) were opened for travellers and poor people who received free food and accommodation.

With a view to popularising and propagating the doctrines of *Mahayana* Buddhism, Harsha arranged at Kanauj a big conference of 20 kings, 3,000 monks, 3,000 Brahmanas and Jainas, 1,000 scholars from the Nalanda and a large number of visitors. It was presided over by Hiuen Tsang. For three weeks all these scholars discussed and thus, the doctrines of Buddhism were, once again, made popular.

Another great ceremony was held for 75 days at Prayag (Allahabad). The images of Buddha, Sun and Shiva were publicly worshipped and gifts of valuable articles and clothing were given

to about 50,00,000 persons belonging to all faiths. Hiuen Tsang writes that Harshavardhana gave away actually everything in the royal treasury and became a monk. Harsha used to repeat such emptying of the royal treasury once in every five years.

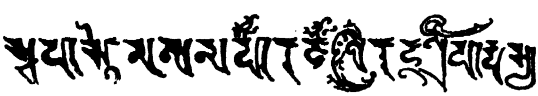
The emperor himself was a great poet. Three dramas — *Nagananda*, *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarshika* — are believed to be composed by Harsha. Banabhatta, the author of *Harshacharita* and *Kadambari* was the court poet of Harsha. He was the chief patron of the university of Nalanda where about 10,000 students from all parts of the world studied.

Harsha was just 17 when he came to the throne, and was faced with a number of difficulties. He pursued a successful career for a few years and then settled down to a rule of peace and plenty. He remained a thorough pacifist throughout and practised all the teachings of Buddha. His generosity was displayed at the conferences of Kanauj and Prayag. He was a gifted man of letters and spent a fourth of the royal revenue for the encouragement of art and literature. He had high and lofty ideals and he "forgot to eat and sleep," in his zeal for the welfare of his subjects. Thus Harshavardhana was really a great emperor who occupies a unique position in Indian history.

CIVILIZATION:

ADMINISTRATION:

Harshavardhana built a vast empire covering almost the entire north. He assumed the title of *Sakalottarapathanatha*. His empire was one of the best organised and justly administered empires of ancient India. The king continued to be the pivot of the administration. Harshavardhana was an ideal king and believed that a king should be devoted to the welfare of his



Autograph of Harshavardhana.

subjects. He followed a strict routine of the king's life and attended to all the affairs of the state. He himself went on inspection tours all over the country. He visited both the urban and the rural areas with equal care. During such visits, Harshavardhana listened to the grievances of the people and redressed them.

During this period also, the council of Ministers (*Mantri-Parishad*) continued to be powerful. Harsha himself was elected to the throne by the *Mantri-Parishad* at a special meeting, held for that purpose. Therefore, inspite of Harsha's impressive conquests, there is reason to believe that the ministry exercised considerable influence on the emperor and the government as well.

The administration was carried on by a well-organised body of officers. The superior civil officers were known by the name *Kumaramatyas*. The district and other officers were recruited from this cadre. The senior officers were not paid in cash, but estates were assigned to them. Two of the departments of government — the foreign affairs and the army — seemed important. Harshavardhana exchanged diplomatic missions with China. He maintained a large army, consisting of infantry, cavalry, elephant and camel corps. The infantry must have been very large. The army was properly organised and manned by several officers of varying grades.

The empire was divided into provinces, divisions, districts and sub-divisions. The governors were known as *Lokapalas*. A province was further divided into *Bhuktis*, *Vishayas*, *Pathakas* and *Gramas*. The village government was in charge of an officer, probably elected, known as *Gramakshapatalika*. He was assisted by a large number of clerks. The village *Panchayat* discharged all the functions as were done in the past. The administration was very efficient because Harsha himself was a just ruler and took all care to discharge his duties properly. He really built a welfare state.

Taxes were light and were collected in cash, kind or service. The rent of the crown lands was one-sixth of the produce. Octroi and other light duties were laid on trade and commerce. Hiuen Tsang states that Harsha divided the income of the state into

four parts: "One part for the expenses of the government and state worship; one for the endowment of great public servants; one to reward high intellectual eminence and one for acquiring religious merit by gifts to various sects." This clearly shows that more than three-fourth of the budget was reserved for the promotion of culture. It is natural that under such a benevolent government, the country greatly prospered. Harsha promoted agriculture, trade and commerce. He built roads and canals, and established hospitals for men and animals. The widows, the old, the sick, the orphans and all such helpless individuals were taken care of by the state. No social security scheme can go beyond this.

The judicial system was equally satisfactory. The Chinese pilgrim was happy to say that the number of criminals was small and the penal code was not very harsh. Capital punishment was rare. But animal-slaughter was a crime punishable by the death sentence. It seems that trial by ordeal of water, of poison and of fire was still in practice.

The most important feature of Harsha's administration was his tolerant religious policy. He equally patronised all the rival sects. The Assembly at Kanauj and the festival of Prayag are sufficient testimonies to his liberal religious policy. Even though he belonged to a family of Shaivas, he accepted Buddhism. But still he openly worshipped Shiva, Sun and the Brahmanas. Hiuen Tsang calls him *Shiladitya* (Sun of good conduct).

Education and Literature:

Harsha, himself a great scholar and a poet, was also a patron of art and literature. The great Nalanda University was under his special patronage. He maintained a magnificent court where philosophers, poets, dramatists and painters flourished. Bana was the court poet. Mayura, the author of ***Mayurashataka***, and Bhartrihari, the author of *Vakyapadiya*, a grammar, also lived at the court of Harsha. Shilabhadra, Buddhabhadra, Gunamati and Dharmapala were some of the Buddhist scholars of the Nalanda University.

Nalanda university was a group of monasteries situated some



A seal from Nalanda.

distance south of Pataliputra. Hiuen Tsang studied there for two years. According to him there were about ten thousand students. The subjects taught also covered a wide range. Buddhist and Vedic philosophy, law, sciences, medicine and fine arts were taught. Hundreds of classes were held every day. Shilabhadra, a great and versatile scholar was the head of the university at that time. The standard of teaching and discipline was fairly high and the graduates of Nalanda University were greatly honoured in all parts of the civilized world of that period.

There were splendid lecture-halls and comfortable residential houses. The students and teachers led a really corporate life and lived like members of a single family. All students were given free board and lodging. Kings and rich merchants had donated liberally. About a hundred villages were given to the Nalanda University for its maintenance.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE (*Hiuen Tsang's account*)

The conditions of social and religious life of the people are best recorded by the Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang). Hiuen Tsang was a rich man of China who came to travel in India during the reign of Harshavardhana. He was a great Buddhist scholar. Like Fa-hien, he came by land but he also returned by land. He was in India for about fifteen years (630-645 A.D.). He gained the sympathy and respect of Harsha and thus secured all possible facilities. He visited all important parts of India, such as Magadha, Kalinga, Badami, and Kanchi.

He collected all possible information about the life of Buddha and Buddhism, carried about six hundred and fifty manuscripts in Sanskrit and wrote a detailed account of what he saw in India. He presided over the conference at Kanauj and participated in the Prayag Assembly. He studied at Nalanda for two years. His writing is considered as a valuable source of history of the seventh century India.

The cities and villages of India, when Hiuen Tsang visited, were well-planned and kept clean, Markets and dwelling-places were separate. Butchers, fishermen, public performers, executioners and scavengers lived outside the cities. The Chinese pilgrim admires the architecture of the Buddhist monasteries.

Buddhism was on the decline. Hiuen Tsang notes that the monks were divided into different classes according to their branch of learning and the prosperity of their monasteries. Caste-system was followed by the people. Inter-caste marriages were not frequent. Mixed classes were already in existence. *Varnashrama Dharma* was supreme. A Maukhari King Ishanavarman is described in the inscription as one learned in *Varnashrama Dharma*. Hiuen Tsang notes that the kings were generally Kshatriyas, but the dynasties of other people also existed there. He praises the efficiency of the soldiers and gives a brief description of the army.

The Government, says the Chinese pilgrim, was generous. Taxes were light. Men were free to move about. The income of the state was spent on cultural and religious activities. Ministers and officials were given estates and others in Government service were paid in cash. Hiuen Tsang visited the courts of Harshavardhana and Pulakeshi II of Badami, two of the greatest monarchs of India of the 7th century. He describes the city of Kanauj, the great assembly of Buddhist scholars and the Prayag festival. In the Deccan the Chinese pilgrim visited the caves of Ajanta and the city of Badami.

Hiuen Tsang observes that the people cared for physical purity and hygiene. "They are pure of themselves and not by compulsion." He describes the custom of taking bath twice or thrice a day, of washing of hands, the love of decent clothes and the free use of gold ornaments like rings, bracelets, necklaces.

Milk, butter, sugar, rice, grain and vegetables formed the common diet. Meat and onions were scarcely used. Women freely attended meetings and discourses of learned men. Hiuen Tsang speaks about the character of the people with great respect. "They are considerate in the administration of justice. There is no treachery or deceit. They are faithful to their promises." The criminal class was small. Hiuen Tsang records that Pataliputra was in ruins. But Kanauj and Prayag were prosperous. Agriculture, trade and industry flourished by the benevolent policy of the state. Foreign trade was brisk and prosperous.

DECLINE:

The empire of Harshavardhana did not last long. It collapsed almost immediately after his death. For this speedy decline Harshavardhana himself was responsible. The empire was vast but not closely organised. The administration was efficient but the system was not well-ordered as that of Mauryan. The maintenance of the empire intact was mainly due to the personal strength and character of the Emperor. Harsha's extravagance and his habit of emptying the treasury resulted in the financial collapse too severe for his successors to meet. A vast empire and a large army could not be maintained with an empty treasury. Only Harshavardhana could do it. Thus, the empire disintegrated and a number of small states rose to power in the North.

Most of these states were ruled by a gallant class of worriors, the *Rajputs*. Hence this period from the death of Harsha to the rise of the Muslims is known as the Rajput period.

SUMMARY

THE HUNAS:

A tribe of fierce barbarians, the Hunas destroyed the Roman and Persian empires. They invaded India about 458 A.D. and were driven back by Skandagupta. However, Tormana, a Huna chief founded a kingdom in 466 and ruled upto 510 A.D. His son Mihiragula, a cruel oppressor, was defeated by two Hindu rulers. He occupied the region of Kashmir and died soon after.

The Hunas ruined the political unity of India: they also destroyed the Buddhist monasteries and thereby Buddhism itself to a great extent. The peace and prosperity of the country disappeared and progress of culture was arrested. Later on, the Hunas were absorbed in the Hindu society.

YASHODHARMAN OF MALWA:

The famous Mandsor inscription describes the achievements of Yashodharman who had the title, *Janendra.* He was one of the two Hindu rulers who defeated Mihiragula. Yashodharman was a good ruler, a patron of religion and culture but nothing is known about his family or successors.

THE MAITRAKAS OF VALABHI:

Founded by Bhattaraka, the dynasty of the Maitrakas was in power from about the 5th century to 8th century A.D. Dhruvasena II, son-in-law of Harsha and Dharasena IV were the two great rulers of this dynasty.

During the reign of the Maitrakas, Valabhi prospered greatly, Trade, industry and religion were promoted. Hiuen Tsang has left a very impressive account of this region. Especially the Valabhi University has been praised by I-Tsing.

LATER GUPTAS OF MALWA AND MAGADHA:

Some rulers with their names ending in Gupta established their rule in Magadha and Malwa but their relation with the Imperial Guptas is not known. However, there were two lines — one in Magadha and another in Malwa. The Guptas of Magadha prospered by their relation with Harsha while those of Malwa wore themselves out in their struggle with Harsha. Nothing much was achieved by any of these rulers.

THE MAUKHARIS:

The Maukharis ruled at Kanauj. Grahavarman of this dynasty married Rajyashri of the Thaneshvar family to which the great Harsha belonged. When this brave but unfortunate Grahavarman was killed in a battle with the ruler of Bengal, Harsha succeeded the throne, as his sister Rajyashri had no children.

KINGDOM OF KANAUJ:

Prabhakaravardhana of this dynasty had two sons — Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana, and one daughter, Rajyashri. She was married to Grahavarman of Kanauj. Rajyavardhana was killed in a battle and Harsha succeeded to the throne. He secured the kingdom of Kanauj also.

HARSHAVARDHANA:

Harsha soon became the master of the entire North. He tried to invade the South but was repelled by Pulakeshin II, the Chalukya of Badami.

Harsha patronised religion, education and literature. Personally he was inclined towards the Mahayana Buddhism but he generously patronised all sects. The Assembly at Kanauj and the festival at Prayag were two important events that reveal Harsha's generous policy towards religion.

He was an author and wrote three Sanskrit plays. Banabhatta was in his court. Harsha was also the chief patron of Nalanda University.

Hiuen Tsang visited India during Harsha's reign. Harsha honoured this Chinese pilgrim as he was a great scholar and a devoted Buddhist.

CIVILIZATION:

Administration:

Harshavardhana was an ideal king who strove for the welfare of his subjects. He spent more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of his revenue for the promotion of religion, education and literature. He respected the ministers and listened to their advice. The empire was divided into numerous divisions and Harsha often visited the various parts of his vast empire. Taxes were light and the government was generally humane.

Education and Literature:

Harsha wrote three Sanskrit plays. In his court lived philosophers, poets, playwrights and painters: of these Bana, Mayura, Bhartrihari, Buddhabhadra, Gunamati and Dharmapala were famous.

Nalanda was the great university where nearly 10,000 students studied. Food, lodging, teaching, everything was free. A large number of subjects were taught. Instruction in both Hinduism and Buddhism was available.

Society and Culture (*Hiuen Tsang's account*):

Hiuen Tsang was in India from 630 to 645 A.D. and visited Kanauj, Valabhi, Nalanda, Badami and Kanchi. His record is considered reliable.

He studied at Nalanda for some years. He also presided over Kanauj conference. His observations are:

The cities and villages of India, were well-planned and kept clean; markets and dwelling-places were separate. Butchers, fishermen, public performers, executioners and scavengers lived outside the cities. The architecture of the Buddhist monasteries was admirable.

Buddhism was on the decline. The monks were divided into different classes according to their branch of learning and also according to the prosperity of their monasteries.

The Government was generous. Taxes were light. Men were free to move about. The income of the state was mostly spent on cultural and religious activities.

It was the popular custom of taking bath twice or thrice a day, of washing of hands, the love of decent clothes and the free use of gold ornaments like rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc. Milk, butter, sugar, rice, grain and vegetables formed the common diet. Meat, garlic and onions were scarcely used. Women freely attended meetings and discourses of learned men.

DECLINE:

Harsha had no sons; his successors were weak; they could not carry on the government with an empty treasury. So, his empire broke up into several states.

9

POLITICAL CHAOS

THE BREAK-UP OF HARSHA'S EMPIRE — YASHOVARMAN — RAJPUTS — THE HIMALAYAN STATES — KABUL AND PANJAB — SIND — THE GURJARA-PRATIHARAS — THE CHANDELAS — THE KALACHURIS — THE PARAMARAS OF MALWA — THE CHAUHANAS — THE PALAS OF BIHAR AND BENGAL — THE CHALUKYAS OF GUJARAT — CIVILIZATION

THE BREAK-UP OF HARSHA'S EMPIRE:

THE break-up of Harsha's empire was sudden. Harshavardhana was succeeded by his minister Arjunashva. Arjuna was most probably an usurper. A Chinese work relates an unhappy incident which led to the fall of Arjuna and the disruption of the empire: Arjuna attacked a Chinese diplomatic mission at Kanauj and plundered their goods after killing some of the attendants. Wang-hiuen-tse, the head of the Chinese mission escaped alive and fled to Nepal. He secured military aid from the Tibetan king, and defeated Arjuna in a series of battles. Finally Arjuna was taken prisoner to China. The country was thus plunged into a political chaos. Even though Harsha's influence dominated over a wide area, his direct control was limited

to a smaller area. All the chiefs and rulers of the different kingdoms and provinces suddenly became independent. The three border states of Assam, Nepal and Kashmir resumed their independent rule. The North was divided among the several Rajput dynasties. Thus the political unity of India was disrupted. The history of India till a very late period is told in different stories of these dynasties that ruled over different parts.

YASHOVARMAN:

The next great ruler of Kanauj after Harsha was Yashovarman (700 to 740 A.D.) who extended the kingdom of Kanauj upto Magadha. He was killed in a battle with Lalitaditya Muktapida of Kashmir who invaded Kanauj in 740 A.D.

This Yashovarman claimed descent from the Lunar race. Much is not known about his ancestors or family. He is remembered for his patronage to literature and religion. During his period Kanauj became a centre of Brahmanical learning. Kanauj Brahmanas gained respect. The study of the *Vedas* and *Vedic* philosophy was vigorously revived. The period is known for a number of great scholars in various branches of learning. Kumarilabhatta, the exponent of the *Purva-Mimamsa* school of philosophy and a gallant defender of the *Vedic* religion lived in Kanauj. Bhavabhuti, one of the greatest dramatists of India wrote his three Sanskrit plays — *Malati-madhavam*, *Mahavira-charita* and *Uttararamacharita*. Vakpatiraja, the court poet of Yashovarman composed his *Gauda-vaho*, a narrative poem in Prakrit, describing the victories of his patron.

Three kings ruled after Yashovarman but their mutual relations are not known. The last ruler Chakrayudha was deposed by Nagabhatta II of the Gujara-Pratihara dynasty of Malwa.

RAJPUTS:

The origin of the Rajputs is controversial. There are various explanations about their origin. According to some, they are

the descendants of the ancient Kshatriyas. Other scholars hold that they are a foreign tribe absorbed as Kshatriyas. According to others, they sprang out of the sacrificial fount of Brahma. However, recent research reveals that the Rajputs who came to fame during the 7th century A.D. are a mixed race of Indian Kshatriyas and the foreign tribes like the Shakas, the Scythians, the Parthians and the Hunas. They are a large group of professional warriors who were gradually absorbed into the Hindu society.

Three important lines of ancient Kshatriya kings are claimed by the Rajput rulers. One is the Solar or the Sun-race to which Shri Rama of the *Ramayana* belonged. The second is the race of the Purus which originated from the Moon. The third one is that of Yadu, the famous house of Yadavas to which Shri Krishna belonged.

Apart from these, there is one more branch of the Rajputs, known as *Agnikula*. According to tradition, they are descended from *Agni*. The sacrificial fount at Mount Abu, is said to be their source and they were created by God in response to the prayer of the Brahmanas. This may be an explanation of a purifying rite performed to absorb the Gonds or the Bhils as well as the foreign tribes into Hinduism.

The Rajputs are renowned as gallant warriors. Pride of the clan, patriotism, high sense of honour, faithfulness, chivalry, reckless courage and generosity are some of the peculiar virtues of the Rajputs. The Rajput women have been equally heroic in spirit. They have a high sense of chastity, self-respect and family honour. Usually the life of a Rajputani has been one of suffering. But she accepted it with a smile and did not hesitate to end her life in a *Jauhar*, rather than to yield to dishonour. Thus, because of their virtues and extraordinary heroism, the Rajputs attained glory and power.

The Rajputs favoured Hinduism. With its glorious past it appealed to their imagination. They disliked Buddhism. The very age was unfavourable for the religion of peace and non-violence. The Rajput who delighted in war and glorified in death,

could not be attracted by Buddhism. They worshipped the horse and performed sacrifices.

The feudal system of their society is another feature. The Rajputs are known for their fidelity to their chiefs, and nothing could tempt them to practise treachery or dishonesty. But this feudal order itself created a clan-feeling and turned India into a congeries of warring states. Their excellent qualities of pride, courage and patriotism were carried to extreme by their narrow clan-feeling. Thus the very qualities that made the Rajputs and their land great, also proved to be the very fatal defects in their character that brought them down. Even in the hour of danger, the proud Rajput would not co-operate with another Rajput of a rival clan or family. The country was lost to the foreigners by the internal conflicts among the Rajputs.

THE HIMALAYAN STATES:

Kamarupa (Assam) is located at the north-eastern end of the Indian sub-continent. It is well protected by natural barriers and therefore has remained independent for a long time. It was outside the Mauryan Empire. Later on, the Gupta Emperors imposed their suzerainty and collected tributes. Kamarupa still retained its internal autonomy. By the 7th century A.D. the rising power of Shashanka of Bengal threatened the security of this small state. Bhaskaravarman, the then ruler of Assam secured the help of Harshavardhana, who had a strong grudge against Shashanka of Bengal, who had treacherously killed Rajyavardhana, the elder brother of Harsha. Harsha readily accepted the offer of friendship by Bhaskaravarman. Shashanka was defeated and his kingdom was divided between the rulers of Assam and Kanauj. Harshavardhana grew from strength to strength and treated Bhaskaravarman as one of his subordinate feudatories. He also attended Harsha's Prayag assembly. After the death of Bhaskaravarman, Assam was occupied by a *Mlechcha* ruler, Shilastambha.

Nepal was included in the empire of Ashoka but it remained outside the Kushana Empire. The Gupta brought it under their

suzerainty. Harsha could not completely eliminate the Tibetan influence over Nepal. After his death, Tibet occupied it fully. However, Nepal regained its independence in 705 A.D. and since then it has remained independent for a long time. However, Nepal was ordinarily outside Indian politics.

Kashmir, with its beautiful valleys, and natural gardens, has attracted people from many lands. Enclosed by mountains, Kashmir has been able to retain its independence. However, Ashoka Maurya included it in his empire and spread Buddhism there. Kanishka also included it in his empire. The famous fourth council of Buddhist scholars was held in Kundalavana Vihara in Kashmir. By the 6th century A.D., Mihirgula, the cruel Huna, came to Kashmir, after being defeated by the Gupta and the Malwa rulers. He was given shelter by the king of Kashmir; but the treacherous Huna killed his benefactor and seized the throne of Kashmir. However, he died very soon. After the death of Mihirgula, a powerful Hindu dynasty known as Karkota dynasty was established in Kashmir by Durlabhavardhana. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Kashmir during his rule. The successor of Durlabhavardhana was Pratapaditya who built a beautiful town and gave it his own name (Pratàpapura). Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-60) was the greatest king of this dynasty. Coming to the throne, about 724 he conquered the Panjab, Kanauj and Kabul. Kalhana credits him with the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat also. He was a lover of architecture and the beautiful *Martanda* temple (of the Sun) was built during his reign. Kashmir lost its superior position after his death in about 760.

The Karkota family was displaced by the Utpalas of whom Avantivarman (855-83) was the most distinguished. Surya his engineer-minister, helped him in constructing temples, lakes and beautiful towns. Recent excavations have brought to light some ruins of these stone temples.

After the Utpalas, the Loharas came to power and ruled for 125 years. Queen Didda of this family ruled from 958-1000. She has earned a place of importance in the history of Kashmir by her powerful rule.

Kashmir was also the home of learning and culture. Buddhist monasteries were built during the period of Ashoka and Kanishka. Lalitaditya and his successors according to Kalhana, also built Buddhist monasteries. But Kshemagupta and the insane Harsha destroyed all temples and monasteries.

A special school of Shaivism was developed by Kashmiri scholars like Vasugupta, Kallata, Somanda, Utpala, etc., on the basis of the *Shaiva-sutras*, a revealed text. Matrigupta, Bhaumaka, Ratnakara, Kshemendra, Somadeva, Bilhana and Kalhana are some of the famous scholars of Kashmir.

KABUL AND THE PANJAB:

The kingdom of Kabul and a portion of the Panjab was known as the *Gandhara.* The Shahi dynasty, which ruled there, was decended from the Kushanas. Even though the Kushana Empire was disintegrated during the third century A.D. the Shahis were able to retain their hold on Gandhara till the end of the 9th century. By this time, a Brahmana minister usurped the throne and founded a dynasty known as the Hind Shahis. Much is not known about the Hindu kings of this dynasty. The best known king was Samantadeva whose coins are found in plenty. Alberuni, the chronicler, writes that Kallar overthrew this dynasty. Kamaluka succeeded him. The Muslims drove them out of the Kabul Valley, and the Hindu kings occupied the ancient city of Und (Udabhandapura). Queen Didda of Kashmir came from this dynasty. The last Hindu Shahi ruler, Trilochanapala, was overthrown by Mahamud of Gazni in 1021-22.

SIND:

During the ancient period, Sind and Baluchistan formed one political unit. However, the rulers were constantly engaged in war with Muslims and these provinces had no intimate relations with the rest of the Hindu country. Sind was divided into three divisions — Upper Sind, Middle Sind and the Delta. It was

divided between many small provinces under petty chiefs. In about 631 a Rajput by name Chacha established his rule and brought entire Sind under his authority. He is described as a Brahmana minister by some writers. His grandson Dahir is definitely described as Rajput of the Samba tribe. However, Chacha and Dahir proved to be able rulers and kept the Arabs at a distance for a long time. In 711 the Arabs invaded the country on the plea that Dahir did not punish the pirates who had captured the ships belonging to Hajaj, the Arab. Under the leadership of young general Mahamad Bin Kasim and with the help of the subjects who were much oppressed by Dahir, the Arabs conquered Sind. They ruled for about a century and spread their religion. They took from India state-craft, medicine, astronomy, etc. Several important works were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic. Their administration was softened and it became liberal. The Arabs destroyed the Maitraka dynasty of Valabhi and the Gurjara kingdom of Broach. The Gurjaras of the Rajputana Desert and the Chalukyas of Badami drove them back.

THE GURJARA-PRATIHARAS:

The Gurjaras belonged to a clan of Rajputs known as the Pratiharas. They are known as the Gurjara-Pratihara kings. They came to power during the first half of the 8th century and occupied Eastern Rajputana and Malwa. By 725, a formidable force was sent by the Arabs of Sind, towards the North. This army marched through Kutch, Kathiawar, Northern Gujarat, and Southern Rajputana, and ultimately threatened Western Malwa. Nagabhatta, the Pratihara ruler of Malwa, resisted and sent them back. Thus the whole of Northern India was saved from the early invasion of the Muslims.

Another ruler of this dynasty Nagabhatta II conquered the Gangetic region and Kanauj. The Pratiharas shifted their capital from Ujjain to Kanauj, under Mihira Bhoja. Mihira Bhoja was another powerful king of this dynasty who ruled from 840 to 890. His dominion was extensive including the Panjab, most

of Rajputana, the major portion of U.P. and the territory of Gwalior. He assumed the title of *Adivaraha,* which suggests that he was a devotee of Vishnu. Numerous coins on which this title is inscribed are found in different parts of Northern India. They also suggest the extent of his kingdom and the long duration of the rule of Mihira Bhoja.

During the rule of Mahendrapala, the son and successor of Mihira Bhoja the (Prakrit) poet Rajashekhara wrote his beautiful *Karpuramanjari.* The Rashtrakuta king, Indra III of the Deccan invaded Kanauj and captured it (916). Mahipala the then ruler recovered it with the help of the Chandela king of Bundelkhand. The next ruler Devapala (940-55) lost the fort of Kalanjar to the Chandelas. The Chandelas also seized the valuable image of Vishnu, the family deity of the Gurjara-Pratiharas. Gwalior became independent during the rule of Rajyapala. Ajayapala, another ruler of this dynasty joined the group of Hindu kings to oppose Sabuktagin in 991 and 1008. Finally Kanauj was conquered by Mahmud of Gazni in 1019. The later descendants of this dynasty ruled Delhi and were known as the Tomaras.

THE CHANDELAS:

The Chandelas were rulers of Bundelkhand (*Jejakabhukti*), a part of the Pratihara empire of Kanauj. By the end of the 9th century, or still later, Harsha of the Chandela dynasty declared his independence. The Pratihara ruler of Kanauj, Mahipala sought the help of the Chandela king, Yashovarman (930-50), to meet the Rashtrakuta invader from the Deccan. Yashovarman was a powerful ruler and conquered Kalanjar from the Pratiharas. Dhanda and Kirtivarman were two other eminent rulers of this dynasty. Kirtivarman (1050-1100) was a patron of learning. He constructed a lovely lake *Kiratasagara.* A number of beautiful temples built at Khajuraho were patronised by Kirtivarman.

THE KALACHURIS:

The region between the Narmada and the Godavari with its

capital Tripuri was under the Kalachuri dynasty of Chedi. Originally the subordinates of the Pratiharas, the Kalachuris asserted their independence in the middle of the 10th century. Lakshmanaraja who is described as conqueror was the founder of his line. It ruled for about a century without any trouble.

THE PARAMARAS OF MALWA:

Upendra was the founder of the Paramara kingdom of Malwa which rose to power about 820. The Paramaras are chiefly remembered for their generous patronage of learning and benevolent rule. Raja Munja, the 7th King of this dynasty ruled from 974 to 995. He was a great poet (Vakpati) and two literary figures—Dhananjaya and Dhanika lived in his court.

Raja Bhoja of Dhara (1018-1060) was the most famous ruler of this dynasty. Himself a great scholar, Raja Bhoja lavishly patronised education and culture. He wrote several valuable books on astronomy, architecture, the art of poetry and other subjects. He founded a Sanskrit college in Dhara. It was later demolished and a mosque was built on its site. He constructed a big lake, Bhojpur, extending to an area of 250 sq. miles. He was killed by the kings of Gujarat and Chedi.

THE CHAUHANS:

The Chauhan clan of the Rajputs originally ruler over Ajmer and Sambhar. Vigraharaya, known as Vishaladeva raised his dynasty to glory by capturing the kingdom of Delhi from the Tomara ruler (about 850). He was a scholar and a patron of literature. He has also written some famous books. Prithviraja Chauhan, the greatest of all the Rajputs belongs to this line.

THE PALAS OF BIHAR AND BENGAL:

After the death of Harsha, Bengal and Bihar were divided into small principalities. By the 8th century, a powerful ruler Gopala

brought together all petty states under him and founded a vast kingdom and a new dynasty. Gopala is remembered for his patronage to Buddhism and the establishment of a great Sangha at Uddantapura (=Bihar-i-Shariff).

Dharmapala, son and successor of Gopala, expanded the kingdom into an empire. Taranatha, a Tibetan historian mentions that the empire of Dharmapala extended from the Bay of Bengal to Delhi, from Jalandhar in the North to the Vindhyas in the South. This seems to be largely correct. Indrayudha, king of Panchala was dethroned by Dharmapala and Chakrayudha was installed in his place. Dharmapala was a staunch Buddhist. Vikramashila, a monastery founded by him grew to be a great university like Nalanda.

Devapala succeeded his father Dharmapala in 815 and ruled gloriously upto 850. In his long rule, Devapala greatly enhanced the prestige of his dynasty. Assam and Kalinga were conquered. Dravida and Gurjara rivals were greatly subdued. The king of Sumatra got permission from Devapala to build a monastery at Nalanda. Devapala was also a devout Buddhist. His court poet, Vajradatta wrote "*Lokeshvara-shataka*", a devotional, narrative poem about the Buddha, as *Lokeshvara* or *Avalokiteshvara*. Certainly Devapala was the greatest of the Palas.

The ninth king of this dynasty, Mahipala was the last great ruler. He defeated Rajendra Chola who had invaded Bengal. After Mahipala, the power of the Palas declined fast.

The Palas strove to revive Buddhism. They sent missions to spread Buddhism in Nepal and Tibet. But in spite of their brave effort, Buddhism did not rise to its former heights in India. Moreover, Buddhism of this period was mixed with Tantric superstitions. It is known as *Vajrayana*. The Buddhists were degraded. However, the two Universities founded by the Palas admirably served the cause of education. The Palas patronised art and architecture. Dhimana and Vitpala, the painter and the sculptor flourished under their patronage.

THE CHALUKYAS OF GUJARAT:

Gujrat since ancient times had been known for its fertile lands

and prosperous foreign trade. The Gurjaras settled there during the declining years of the Guptas, of whose empire Gujarat was a part. The dynasty of these Gurjaras was known as Valabhi Maitrakas whose history has been already reviewed in the last chapter.

The Chavadas were ruling at Anahilwara at the same time as the Valabhis. The Chavadas were overthrown by Mularaja Chalukya (Solanki) in 961. He had married the daughter of the last Chavada ruler. He soon conquered Kathiawar, Surat and Broach. He built temples and patronised learning. He died in 996. His descendants ruled for about three hundred years.

CIVILAZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

From the death of Harsha to the end of the 10th century, the North was divided into small kingdoms. The unity of India was destroyed. The rulers who belonged to one or the other clan of Rajputs were engaged in wars. A number of dynasties rose and fell. A remarkable feature of the period was that there were no foreign invasions except the Arab episode of Sind, till the advent of Mohammad of Gazni. The independent Hindu rulers of the North India, during 400 years frittered away their strength and resources in weakening each other and thus created conditions favourable for foreign invasion and conquest.

Even though we read of kings who built temples, monasteries, canals and lakes, and patronised learning and culture, we do not hear of any good system of administration as such. Perhaps Mularaj Chalukya of Gujarat had established a system of administration which enabled his successors to rule for a long time.

The unstable conditions of Medieval India created a fear of anarchy in the mind of Narada who pleaded for the unquestioned authority of the king. But Shukra points out that a king, by definition itself, is a good and just ruler. Only just rulers should be obeyed and not tyrants and usurpers. He advised the people to be

vigilant about the rule of their kings and to revolt against tyrants and oppressors.

Hindu kings of this period were despots but not oppressors. We do read about the court of kings at which thrived noblemen and men of art and literature and culture. Occasionally, kings must have consulted the nobles in matters of war and peace. But the court could in no way compare with the ancient *Sabha* and *Samiti* or even the *Mantriparishad*, in the exercise of influence over the ruler. Nearly all the kings were highly educated and many have left valuable works. Except a few rulers like the Huna, Mihiragula, and Harsha of Kashmir, all were benevolent rulers. They undertook several measures of public welfare. All of them again followed a liberal religious policy. The Palas of Bengal and Bihar favoured Buddhism. The Paramars and the Chalukyas patronised Jainism. Yashovarman of Kanauj and the Senas (the Brahmana-Kshatriya dynasty from Karnataka who gained power in Bengal) revived *Vedic* Brahmanism. The Rajputs followed Hinduism. None of them oppressed any religion or interfered with the caste-system which was firmly established during this period. That is why there was stability of social and economic conditions and cultural progress even in an age of rapid political upheavals. The people as a rule, contented themselves by entrusting the political authority to kings who in turn maintained in tact the age-long pattern of life. Villages retained their autonomy and their *Panchayats* continued to be powerful. The rulers never disturbed the peace of the villages.

The Arabs by their brief stay in India benefitted themselves. They took several things such as the art of state-craft and sciences. But it is really strange that the Indians did not take anything from the Arabs. Perhaps the Arabs did not come in contact with a larger area and cultural deterioration had started in that region during the oppressive rule of Chacha and Dahir.

RELIGION:

Jaina religion remained almost unchanged. On account of its strict code of rituals and discipline, it could not become popular. Despite the occasional support of the rulers, Jaina leaders did not

show any zeal for numbers. Even to-day, the Jaina is one of the important religions of India, though its followers are not many. The Jaina scholars have contributed to philosophy and sciences.

A number of factors were responsible for the total disappearance of Buddhism from India. The destruction of the Buddhist *Sanghas* by the Hunas was a severe blow from which the Buddhists could not recover, in spite of the generous patronage of Harshavardhana and the Palas. The large number of idlers and shirkers who freely entered the *Sanghas* as *Bhikkhus* forgot the ideals of study and social service, and indulged in immoral and anti-social practices. The people lost their confidence in these wandering monks who were but a nuisance and a burden on society. Thus, the excellent way of life preached by Buddha was given up and Buddhism met its natural end. Moreover, the *Mahayana* sect which had adopted the important features of the Vedic religion was easily absorbed by the latter. Buddha himself was adopted by the Brahmanas as an *avatara* of the God. However, it is to be remembered that the teachings of the Buddha were derived from the *Upanishads* and naturally, they have considerably influenced the subsequent thinkers.

Hinduism :

Hinduism was the most predominent religion and in spite of the Jaina and Buddhist religions, it was followed by the largest number. However, many sects, such as the *Nathas*, the *Pashupatas*, the *Kalamukhas*, and a variety of *Tantric* schools had developed within Hinduism. Some of these introduced practices which were indecent or even immoral. The Hindus were affected by the decay in other sects. Therefore, it was necessary that the *Vedic* religion be rescued from chaos and decay. Moreover, it was necessary to harmonize the various sects into an uniform pattern, and thereby give the much needed strength to Hinduism. The efforts of Gaudapada, Kumarilabhatta, Mandanamishra, and other scholars met with only a partial success, as they appealed to limited class of intellectuals of orthodox tradition. But the society needed a comprehensive renaissance and that was supplied by the great Shankaracharya whose achievements remain unsurpassed. It is impossible to

describe in words his contribution to philosophy, religion, literature and culture. We attempt below a brief outline of his life and works.

SHANKARACHARYA:

Scholars are not unanimous about the date of Shankaracharya's birth. Recent researches however tend to place him during the 7th and 8th centuries. Strangely enough all scholars are unanimous that Shankaracharya lived for 32 years only.

Born in Malabar, in South India, Shankaracharya completed the *Vedic* studies at an early age. He adopted the Sanyasa-Ashrama and toured all over India preaching, arguing and persuading various scholars to accept his philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta.* It is significant that he visited all the important centres of learning and established the fundamental unity of India. He defeated all the scholars who encountered him in debate and earned the epithets *Sarvajna* and *Jagadguru.* He explored the Himalaya mountains and discovered the shrines of Shri Kedaranath and Shri Badarikeshvara and installed his disciples there. He breathed his last in the Himalayas.

His achievements may be summed up as:

Shankara was a great scholar, philosopher, yogi and equally, a great devotee. He propagated the love of God and composed many devotional prayers.

He reformed the methods of worshipping from the uncivilized or indecent practices of the several Tantric schools and initiated a pleasant and elevating system of puja of the six deities: Shiva, Shakti, Surya, Vishnu, Ganapati, and Shanmukha. Therefore, he is called *shanmatasthapanacharya* (founder of the six paths).

He established four *Mathas* in four corners of India, i.e. at Shringeri in the South, at Puri in the East, at Dvaraka in the West and at Badari in the North. These four *Mathas* represent the four Vedas and the four corners of India. As Nehru points out, by locating his four great monasteries in the North, South, East and West, Shankara evidently wanted to encourage the conception of a culturally united India. In addition, there came to be established many other *mathas* of which the one at Kanchipuram is considered to be quite important.

He devised the ten orders of the *sanyasis* and clearly defined their duties and obligations to the society. All these *mathas* and the mendicants have been serving the Indian society in the fields of education, culture, religion and social service, and thereby helping social progress. Shankara being a great organizer and a reformer, he strove hard to eliminate all sorts of unhealthy practices in religion and society.

The most significant contribution of Shankaracharya is his commentaries on the *Trayi*, the three sources of Indian philosophy, viz. the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita.* These commentaries have earned him a unique place in the world of philosophy. He gave an impetus to the study of philosophy and brought about a great renaissance. He is justly acclaimed as the Father of the Vedanta school of thought.

In addition to these great commentaries, Shankara was the author of numerous works, both in verse and prose, on a variety of philosophical and theological subjects.

Shankara harmonized and synthesised the various theological and philosophical schools. He particularly propagated the path of knowledge, coupled with an intense devotion to God. It is no wonder that all the subsequent scholars and religious leaders, including those who radically differed from him, have accepted his system of the worship of dieties, the texts fixed by him, and the *sanyasa* order as devised by him.

Shankaracharya's significant achievements are summarised by Jawaharlal Nehru:

> It would seem that Shankara wanted to add to the already existing sense of national unity and common consciousness. He functioned on the intellectual, philosophical and religious plane and tried to bring about a greater unity of thought all over the country. He functioned also on the popular plane in many ways, destroying many a dogma and opening the door of his philosophic sanctuary to every one who was capable of entering it.

Social and Economic Conditions:

The *Varnashrama* system was retained and all castes were included in it. This recognition of caste groups brought harmony in

social life. The Rajputs were recognised as Kshatriyas and with them all foreigners and some aboriginal tribes were also absorbed in the Hinduism. Rivalry, jealousy and hatred of the present-day caste-groups are not the inherent characteristics of the system. As every other group was based on economic or political principles, caste became gradually rigid and exclusive. The evils are due to the historical causes of a more recent period. The defects of the caste-system are exaggerated and its benefits ignored. However, some scholars have praised the caste-system. For instance, Sidney Low, in his *Vision of India*, observes:

> There is no doubt that its caste-system is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends. It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body. It protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations. It ensures him companionship and a sense of community with others in like cases with himself. The caste organisation is to the Hindu his club, his trade-union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society.

Inter-caste marriages continued during this period. Joint families continued to exist and women occupied an honourable position. They moved freely in society. The Rajput princesses were allowed freedom to choose their grooms in *Swayamvara*. Education was fairly widespread among women. The Great Shankaracharya was defeated in his discussion by the learned lady Sharada Devi who is regarded as an *avatar* of the Goddess Shakti. Women were quite proficient in fine arts like music, dancing and painting. Rajputs valued the honour of their women. Chastity was regarded as the highest virtue. *Sati* and *Jauhar* seemed to have been common. Restrictions on movements of women and the *Purdah* came to be imposed much later. They were even then, for protecting their honour without affecting her status in society. Women continued to enjoy a position of great honour in the household.

It seems the habits of food did not change much. Meat was avoided by the Brahmanas and some upper classes. But drinking

of wines continued to be common. Dress too changed little in its pattern but costly and colourful garments came in vogue.

Economic prosperity minimised the severity of the social classes. Kshatriyas (Rajputs) were the dominant class in society, almost a noble and proud-aristocracy. They were rulers and warriors. Brahmanas continued to be scholars and priests and many of them became ministers and officers. Merchants and craftsmen combined themselves into well-organised guilds. The period witnessed considerable economic progress. Foreign trade was brisk and profitable. Silk and cotton textiles, metal work, jewellery, and all types of handicrafts were well developed. The Rajput princes and wealthy merchants had with them large quantities of pearls, precious stones, and gold ornaments. Gold and silver ornaments were freely used. Temples and monasteries were endowed with large landed properties. The literature of the period contains numerous references to the lavish donations and charities of rulers, merchants and others. Certainly the common man was happier during the period than in any later period.

LITERATURE:

This period of about 400 years produced an impressive variety of works on religion, philosophy, poetry, drama, history, politics and sciences. It is impossible to list all authors and their writings. Some of them are mentioned below.

Gaudapada with his *Karikas*, Kumarilabhatta of the *Purva-Mimansa* school, and the Great Shankaracharya, were outstanding Pandits of the times. Vasugupta, Kallata, Somananda, Utpala and Abhinavagupta contributed to the study of Kashmir Shaivism. Jayadeva's *Gita-Govinda* is the most pleasing devotional poem. Contribution to Jaina literature, sacred and secular, during the period of the 6th to 11th centuries, was varied and vast. Hemachandra and Merutunga, Umasvati and Amitagati, Chamunda-Maharaj and Shantisuri, were leading Jaina writers. Amongst the Buddhists, Shantideva wrote *Shikshasamuchchaya*, *Sutrasamuchchaya*, and *Bodhicharyavatara*. Chandragomin of *Shishya-lekha-dharma*, was a senior contemporary of Shantideva.

All branches of literature flourished under the patronage of

the Rajputs. Drama was their favourite form of literature. Vigraharaja the Chauhan, inscribed on stone slabs two plays of which one was written by him. The dramatists and artistes flourished in almost every court. Rajashekhara wrote his *Karpurmanjari* in Prakrit. *Gita-Govinda* is a devotional poem which is known for its dramatic qualities. Bhavabhuti's *Malatimadhavam*, *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttararamacharita* rank among the best plays. Rajashekhara wrote *Kavyamimamsa*, *Balaramayana and Balabharata*. Raja Munja patronised Dhanika, Dhananjaya and Padmagupta. Bhaumaka explained Grammar in a story from the *Ramayana*. Mention may be made of *Gaudavaho* of Vakpatiraja, *Ramacharita* of Sandhyachara Nandi, *Chandrakaushika* of Kshemishvara, *Vikramankacharita* of Bilhana, *Prithviraja Raso* of Chand Bardai and *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. Somadeva's *Katha-sarit-sagara* and Kshemendra's *Brihatkathamanjari* belong to this period.

Shukra's *Nitisara* is the best and most important work on political science. *Mitakshara*, the authoritative commentary on *Yajnavalkya-Smriti* was written by Vijnaneshvara during the period. Vagbhata produced *Ashtanga-sangraha* on medicine. Bhaskaracharya was a great astronomer and mathematician. Raja Bhoja was author royal of many books on varied topics: astronomy, poetics and architecture and others.

Art and Architecture:

It is no wonder that temples, palaces, monasteries, etc., were built in large numbers during this period. But most of them were destroyed by the invaders during and after the eleventh century. A few of the surviving ones testify to the high standard of art and architecture. In addition to these, we read of numerous irrigation works, bathing pools, reservoirs and forts.

The architecture mainly belongs to the Aryan school. The most famous examples of this style are the temple of Bhuvaneshvara in Orissa and the temples of Khajuraho in Bundelkhand. The sides of the Khajuraho temples are richly decorated with fine sculpture. The finest examples of the mediaeval architecture are the Jaina temples on Mount Abu. Of these, the temple of Tejapala is praised most by the eminent art-critics. Fergusson writes about

the centre dome: "It appears like a cluster of half-disclosed lotus, whose cups are so thin, so transparent, and so accurately wrought out, that it fixes the eye in admiration." The halls of the temple are of pure white marble and reveal excellent and delicate workmanship.

The temples of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Gwalior are too numerous to mention. Several monasteries, *Chaityas* and a few rock-cut temples are also found to be of this age.

SUMMARY

YASHOVARMAN: (about 700 to 740 A.D.)

Yashovarman protected the kingdom of Kanauj and extended it upto Magadha. He was killed in a battle with Lalitaditya of Kashmir.

He was a patron of religion and culture. Scholars like Kumarilabhatta, Mandanamishra, Bhavabhuti, Vakpatiraja etc. lived during this period.

RAJPUTS:

The Rajputs are renowned as gallant warriors. Pride of the clan, patriotism, high sense of honour, loyalty, chivalry, reckless courage and generosity are some of their peculiar virtues. The Rajput women have been equally heroic in spirit. They have a high sense of chastity, self-respect and family honour. Usually the life of a Rajputani was one of constant suffering. But she accepted it with a smile and did not hesitate to end her life in a *Jauhar*, rather than yield to dishonour. Thus, because of their virtues and extraordinary heroism, the Rajputs attained glory and power.

The Rajputs favoured Hinduism. With its glorious past it appealed to their imagination. They disliked Buddhism.

Their excellent qualities of pride, courage and patriotism were carried to an extreme by their narrow clan-feeling. Thus the very qualities that made the Rajputs and their land great, also proved to be fatal defects in their character, that brought them down. Even in the hour of danger, the proud Rajput would not cooperate with another Rajput of a rival clan or family.

THE HIMALAYAN STATES:

Assam and Nepal, two border states of India, were historically unimportant. Kashmir has a long history. Kashmir was a part of the Maurya, Kushana

and Gupta empires and the Karkota, the Utpala and the Loharas ruled there in succession. Of the rulers, Lalitaditya Muktapida, Avantivarman, and Queen Didda were famous.

Kashmir was also a home of culture. Scholars, poets, philosophers, artists thrived and have made valuable contributions to Indian culture.

KABUL AND PANJAB:

After the decline of the Kushanas, Kabul and Panjab were ruled by Hindu Shahis till the advent of the Muslims. Of the several rulers Samantadeva and Trilochanapala were noteworthy.

SIND: (The Arab invasion)

Chacha, a Rajput ruler united Sind which was originally divided into three parts. His grandson Dahir resisted the Arabs till 711 A.D. when Mahamad Bin Kasim killed him. The Arabs occupied Sind for about a century. They learnt state-craft, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, from Indians. They tried to expand their sway but were driven out of India by the Gurjaras and the Chalukyas.

THE GURJARA PRATIHARAS:

Nagabhatta resisted the Arab invasion of Rajputana and Malwa. The Gurjara Pratiharas changed their capital from Ujjain to Kanauj. Mihira Bhoja, Mahendrapala, Mahipala were well known rulers. They were often disturbed by the Rashtrakutas from the Deccan.

The Chandelas, the Kalachuris and the Paramaras were dynasties ruling in Bundelkhand, Orissa and Malwa. Of them, Raja Munja and Raja Bhoja of the Paramara dynasty were great scholars and patrons of learning.

The Chauhans ruled from Delhi and the famous Rajput hero Prithviraja belonged to this family.

THE PALAS:

The Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar rose to power in about 800 A.D. and established a powerful kingdom. They patronised Buddhism and education. The Uddhantapura and Vikramashila Universities prospered under their patronage.

CIVILIZATION:

Political Life:

From the death of Harsha to the end of the 10th century, the North was divided into small kingdoms. The unity of India was broken. The rulers who belonged to one or the other clan of Rajputs were engaged in mutual fights. A number of dynasties rose and fell. There were kings who built temples, monastries, canals and lakes, and patronised learning and culture. None of them persecuted any religion or interfered with the caste-system which became firmly established during this period. That is again an important reason why there was stability of social and economic conditions, and of the cultural progress, in an age of rapid political upheavals. The people as a rule, contented themselves by entrusting the political authority to the fighting kings who in turn protected and maintained in tact the age-long pattern of life of their subjects. Villages retained their autonomy and their Panchayats continued to be powerful. The rulers never disturbed the peace of the villages.

Religion:

Owing to the loss of royal patronage, the destruction of the monasteries and the lack of sincere workers, Buddhism disappeared from India.

Shankaracharya established the supremacy of the *Vedic* religion and laid the foundation of the new Hindu religion and culture by his writings, tours and establishment of *Mathas*. His achievements must be studied carefully.

Social and Economic Conditions:

The *Varnashrama* system was retained and all the castes were recognised and included in it. This recognition of various caste groups was the reason for harmony of social life. The Rajputs were recognised as Kshatriyas and with them all foreigners and some aboriginal tribes were also absorbed in Hinduism. Rivalry, jealousy and hatred of the present-day caste-groups were not the inherent characteristics of the system.

> "There is no doubt that it (caste-system) is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his ocupation, his circle of friends. It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body. It protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations. It ensures him companionship and a sense of community with others in like cases with himself. The caste organisation is to the Hindu his club, his trade-union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society." — Sidney Low

Inter-caste marriages continued during this period, though not approved by the law-books. Joint families continued to exist and women occupied an honourable position. They moved freely in society.

Merchants and craftsmen combined themselves into well-organised guilds. The period witnessed considerable economic progress. Foreign trade was brisk and profitable. Silk and cottons, metal work, jewellery, and all types of handicrafts were well developed. The Rajput princes and wealthy merchants had large quantities of pearls, precious stones, and gold ornaments. People freely used gold and silver ornaments. Temples and monasteries with the large landed properties, promotion of literature, art and architecture, all these indicated prosperity of the times.

LITERATURE:

Of several scholars, philosophers and writers of this period, the most important are: Gaudapada, Kumarilabhatta, Shankaracharya, Vasugupta Jayadeva, Rajashekhara, Bhavabhuti, Raja Bhoja, Kalhana, Bilhana and Somadeva.

10

THE DECCAN

THE DECCAN — THE KADAMBAS — THE GANGAS — THE CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI — THE RASHTRAKUTAS — THE LATER CHALUKYAS — CIVILIZATION

THE DECCAN:

THE early history of the Deccan is shrouded in mystery. The rule of the Andhra-Shatavahanas and the Vakatakas has been described in Chapters V and VI. The Vakatakas were the rulers of Madhya Pradesh and they extended their rule over the Deccan as well as in the North. The achievements of the Vakatakas in the realm of art and architecture are well-known. Prof. Dubreuil states:

> "Of all the dynasties that have reigned from the third to the sixth century the most glorious, the one that must be given the place of honour, the one that has excelled all others, the one that had the greatest civilization of the whole Deccan is unquestionably the illustrious dynasty of the Vakatakas."

The caves of Ajanta are enough to prove their greatness. After the decline of the Vakatakas by 600, the Chalukyas rose to glory.

They were not the earliest of the Deccan powers. The Vakatakas had to deal with the earliest dynasties. As in the North, we find in the South also a number of warring dynasties. But still, there is an impressive record of achievements in the progress of culture. A few important dynasties of the Deccan are reviewed here:

THE KADAMBAS:

The Kadambas rose to power after the fall of the Andhra-Shatavahana empire. Originally they were the feudatories of the Pallavas of Kanchi. The dynasty was founded by a Brahmana, Mayurasharma, a disciple of Virasharman. According to the inscription of Talagunda (Mysore), this veteran Brahmana went to Kanchi the capital of the Pallavas to complete his *Vedic* studies. There he was ill-treated by a Pallava horseman. Thus enraged by the un-Kshatriya act of the Pallava soldier, Mayura took up arms with the same ease as he could gather the Kusha grass. He soon asserted himself and established an independent kingdom in the vicinity of Triparvata (in the Karnul district). The Pallavas recognised Mayura as their Dandanayaka and made him king of the territory near the Western Sea. This is how perhaps the city of Banavasi (now in the district of Karwar) came to be the capital of the Kadambas. Triparvata, Uchchangi and Banavasi are three capitals mentioned in the inscriptions. Mayura ruled from 345 to 370 and performed 18 sacrifices. His successors, Kangavarma (370-395) and Bhagiratha (395-420) came in conflict with the Vakataka Prithvisena I. However, the Gupta emperor, Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya sent an embassy to Bhagiratha, under the leadership of the celebrated poet Kalidasa.

Kakusthavarma (430-450) was a wise statesman who maintained friendly and matrimonial relations with the Vakatakas and the Guptas. He was followed by Shantivarma (450-475) described "as the ruler of Karnataka with 18 subordinate chieftains."

Under Mrigeshvarma (475-490), the Kadamba empire was divided. Krishnavarma founded the kingdom of Triparvata which was soon dominated by the Pallavas. Another prince, Muraravarma

established himself as the ruler of Uchchashringi (Uchchangi) and defeated the Gangas of Talkad on the Kaveri. He eventually changed his capital to Talkad.

Vishnuvarma (485-497) was a great scholar in grammar and logic. Ravivarma (497-537) of the Banavasi line was the most famous of the Kadambas. He defeated the Pallavas and established his superiority over a wide area. Harivarma (537-547) of this line lost his throne to Krishnavarma II of the Triparvata line. Krishnavarma (540-547) ruled over the whole of the Kadamba empire, during whose period, Chalukya Pulakeshi I declared himself independent, at Vatapi. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited the Kadamba empire during the reign of Bhagavarma. The last ruler, Madhuvarma (651-655) was destroyed by Vikramaditya I of the Chalukyas of Badami. The Kadambas, however, ruled as subordinate kings upto the end of the 10th century. Some of them came to power once again after the fall of the Rashtrakutas, and ruled at Hangal and Goa.

THE GANGAS

The Gangas, one of the early dynasties of the Karnataka, played an important role in the politics of the period between the 4th and 10th centuries. They claim descent from the Ikshvaku dynasty of Shri Rama. The foundation of the Ganga dynasty was laid by Kankanavarma (Konganivarma) during the 4th century at the initiation of the Jaina Acharya Sinhananda. His successor Madhava was a great scholar in *Nitishastra*, *Upanishads* and other branches of learning. He helped the Pallavas in their struggle with the Kadambas. Vishnugopa another king of this line became Vaishnava while his successor, Tadangala Madhava was a worshipper of Shiva and granted many endowments to Jaina temples and Buddhist *viharas*. Durvinita was the most remarkable monarch of the Gangas. He respected the Jaina scholar Pujyapada and wrote a commentary on Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniyam* as well as the Sanskrit edition of *Brihatkatha*. He gallantly fought against the Pallavas. His successor, Shri Vikrama made Jainism the state religion.

During the reign of Shri Purusha (726-788). the prosperity of the Gangas reached its zenith and they adopted the title, *Parmanandi.* Shivamara II (788-812) was an authority on elephants and wrote *Gajashastra.* Rashtrakutas began to make inroads on the Ganga territories. Satyavakya (817-869) resisted them. But Bankesh, the general of Amoghavarsha I molested the Gangas. The Gangas patronised the construction of the biggest monolith of *Gomataraya* in 983 through their general Chavundaraya. The Gangas were over-thrown by Rajendra Chola in 1004.

THE CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI:

The origin of the Chalukyas is not definitely known. They are the same, according to some scholars, as the Solankis of Gujarat who migrated to the North from the South. But the Indian tradition indicates that they were the descendents of the clan of *Kshatriyas* known as Haritiputras, coming from Ayodhya.. The Aihole inscription of 634 mentions Jayasinha as the founder of this dynasty. He was followed by his son Ranaraga. Nothing is known about them beyond this. Ranaraga was followed by the great monarch Pulakeshi I. He is the real founder of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami.

Besides this, there are three more lines of the Chalukyas (1) of Kalyani, (2) of Lata (Gujarat), and of Vengi (Eastern). The last two were co-terminous with the Badami and Kalyani lines; the Chalukyas of Kalyani came a bit later.

An inscription of the 543 records that Pulakeshi I made Badami (Vatapi) his capital. He adopted the title *Vallabheshvar* and performed the *Ashvamedha.* He was succeeded by Kirtivarma who extended the kingdom by defeating the Mauryas of North Konkana, the Nalas of Nalavadi (Ballari) and the Kadambas of Banavasi. The conquest of Konkana brought the port of Goa into his empire. He invaded the territories of Bihar and Bengal in the North and the Chola-Pandya region in the South. He died about the close of the 6th century and was succeeded by Mangalesha, his brother. Kirtivarma's son Pulakeshi II was too young and Mangalesha began to rule as a sort of regent. Mangalesha established the power of

the Chalukyas over the entire region between the two seas and defeated the Kalachuris of Chedi. A beautiful cave-temple of Vishnu was constructed under his patronage. Mangalesha showed no signs of recognising the claims of Pulakeshi II even when he came of age and so, he became impatient. Pulakeshi revolted, defeated his uncle, and ascended the throne in 609, with the title *Satyashraya.*

During the civil strife between Mangalesha and Pulakeshi II, some of the chiefs of the provinces tried to revolt. But the young king was an able military leader. He subdued them. The Aihole inscription of 634 gives a full account of Pulakeshi's conquests. Pulakeshi defeated the rulers of the Latas, the Malavas, and the Gurjaras. An inscription refers to his war with Harshavardhana of Kanauj. This Emperor of the North whose lotus-feet were covered with rays of the jewels of the diadema of the hosts of the feudatories, says the inscription, was by Pulakeshi made to lose his mirth in fear. Harsha was defeated on the banks of the Narmada (620) and his war-elephants were captured by Pulakeshi II. The victory over Harsha terrorised the rulers of Mahakosala and Kalinga who readily submitted to him. By 634, Pulakeshi II had become the unrivalled emperor in the South. His empire included the three *Maharashtrakas* with 99 thousands villages.

The Pallavas of Kanchi were rivals of Pulakeshi II in the South. He defeated the king Mahendravarma of Kanchi and threatened his capital. The other three states in the South, the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Keralas did not wait for a raid but submitted to his suzerainty.

One of the paintings in Ajanta represents Pulakeshi II receiving an ambassador from Iran. On the account of the growing power of Pulakeshi II and the trade relations with India, the Iranian King Khusru II sent an ambassador to Badami in return for the ambassador sent by Pulakeshi to Iran in 625.

Hiuen Tsang who came to India during the rule of Harsha visited the court of Chalukya Emperor Pulakeshi II in 640-41. The Chinese pilgrim states that the people of the Deccan were proud and had a warlike spirit; they were undaunted in war, and revengeful for wrongs and grateful for favours. Pulakeshi was an object of

fear to his neighbours but had won their hearts by his benevolent rule. His vassals all over his wide dominions served Pulakeshi with devotion.

Pulakeshi II was not destined to live long in peace. In 642, the Pallava Narasinhavarma invaded Badami and Pulakeshi II was killed.

Thus ended the glorious life of a great ruler who had established his sway over the entire South and defeated Harsha, one of the greatest rulers of the North. Pulakeshi during his rule of 33 years established peace in his territory, encouraged art and architecture, promoted religion and learning.

For about 13 years after the death of Pulakeshi, the Chalukyas were in an humbled position. Vikramaditya I, a son of Pulakeshi II, defeated the Pallavas and captured their capital. He revived the glory of the Chalukyas, and ruled for more than 25 years till his death in 680. Vinayaditya (680-96) his son inflicted a defeat on Adityasena (or his son Devagupta) who was *Parambhattarka Maharajadhiraja* and '*Sakalottarapathanatha.*" Obviously '*Sakalottarapathanatha*' was an exaggeration. Vijayaditya who followed his father Vinayaditya maintained the empire in tact. (696-733). He was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya II (733-747). He once again invaded the Pallava Kingdom and captured Kanchi, and fought with the Cholas and the Pandyas. The most important event of the reign of Vikramaditya II was the invasion of the Arabs. They had occupied Sindh and tried to penetrate into the Deccan. Vikramaditya sent them back. Thus the Deccan was saved. Vikramaditya II was the last great ruler of the Badami Chalukya line. His son Kirtivarman II was ousted by the Rashtrakutas in 757.

The Chalukyas ruled over the Deccan for nearly 200 years. During their regime, literature, art and architecture progressed and religious harmony was maintained. The Chalukya glory has been immortalised by a unique style of architecture named after them.

THE RASHTRAKUTAS:

The early Rashtrakutas are described as belonging to Lattalurpura which is not definitely identified. Their later records, from

870 claim a Yadu descent. (Satyaki Branch). The first king of the Rashtrakutas was Indra I. He came to power in 722. Indra I carried away a Chalukya princess from the marriage pandal, at Kaira. He was succeeded by Dantidurga (745-758), a great military conqueror, who defeated the rulers of Kanchi, Kalinga, Shrishaila, Kosala, Lata and Sindh. His most important victory was over Kirtivarman II of the Chalukyas of Badami, by about 757. He seized all power from the Chalukyas and declared himself the supreme lord of the Deccan. He probably occupied, in addition, Khandesh, Nasik, Poona, Satara and Kolhapur.

Dantidurga died childless. His uncle Krishna I came to power (758-772). Krishna completed the overthrow of the Chalukyas and expanded the kingdom in all directions. Southern Konkana was added to his empire. Gangas were subdued. The Chalukya ruler of Vengi, Vijayaditya surrendered without a fight. Krishna is chiefly remembered for construction of the celebrated Kailasa temple at Ellora (Verul). He was succeeded by Govind II who lost his throne to his brother Dhruva within a decade.

Dhruva (780-793) who usurped the throne from his brother subdued all the feudatories once again. The Pallava kings surrendered to him. Dhruva marched into the territory of Vatsaraja, the Gurjara-Pratihara. The King of Bengal, Dharmapala was defeated in the Ganga Valley. Of his four sons, Dhruva chose Govinda III to succeed him. Govinda ascended the throne in 793. But his elder brother Kambha (*Stambha*) organised a formidable opposition and defeated 12 rulers and still respected his elder brother by making him the viceroy of Gangavadi. The Pallavas were defeated. Nagabhatta II of the Gurjara dynasty of Malwa was humbled. Govinda proceeded North and defeated Chakrayudha of Kanauj together with his protector Dharmapala. On his way back, during his stay at Shribhavan on the Narmada, his son Amoghavarsha I was born in 808. Once again Govinda dashed across the Deccan and defeated Dantivarma of Kanchi. The king of Ceylon sent him an embassy with tributes. The rulers of Vengi felt the power of Govind II but did not submit. However, his son, Govind III proved his military superiority over all the rulers of India, from the Hima-

layas to the Island of Ceylon. "One of the greatest monarchs of the line, Govinda's achievements so far to justify the claim of his court poets that after his birth, the Rashtrakutas became as unassailable as the Yadavas after the birth of Shri Krishna."

Govinda III was succeeded by his son Amoghavarsha I (Nripatunga) in 813 who with a break of about five years due to some internal trouble, ruled for 64 years. The war with the Chalukyas continued. The Vengi ruler, Gunaga Vijayaditya III tried his best to free his kingdom from the domination of the Rashtrakutas. But Amoghavarsha defeated him finally about 850. Amoghavarsha was always dragged into wars by one or the other feudatory kings and with the help of his able general Bankesha, he came out triumphant in all contests. The rulers of Anga, Vanga and Magadha paid him tribute. The rulers of Konkana and Malwa were his feudatories.

Amoghavarsha I was a great ruler, perhaps the greatest in his line. He certainly excelled his father in his patronage to art and literature. He was a religious man and patronised all religions but favoured Jainism. Jina Sena, the author of the *Adipurana* lived in his court. Amoghavarsha himself was a great scholar. The authorship of *Kavirajamarga*, the first literary work in Kannada and *Prashnottaramalika*, a Jaina catechism, is attributed to him. Some historians are of the opinion that he was a devotee of Jina only. But he was as much a devotee of Mahalakshmi. The famous capital of the Rashtrakutas, Manyakheta (Malakheda) was built once again to excel that of God Indra. "His palace was full of fine workmanship and included an extensive apartment for the royal princesses and a tank." He surely justified his title *Nripatunga.*

Amoghavarsha I was succeeded by Krishna II (880-912) who suffered a defeat at the hands of the Vengi-Chalukyas and the Gurjaras of Kanauj. He was followed by his grandson Indra III (913-928) who avenged his grandfather's defeat by defeating Upendra, Paramara, and marched up to the Jamuna and captured Mahipala of Kanauj. Thus he restored the honour of the Rashtrakutas. Amoghavarsha II (928-930), Govinda IV (930-936) and Amoghavarsha III (936-940) were able to maintain the vast empire in tact, though with some difficulty. Krishna III (940-968) once again triumphed over the North. The Chalukya dynasty of Vengi

was ousted by him. He once again exacted tribute from the ruler of Ceylon. During the reign of Amoghavarsha IV (968-972) and Karka II (Kakka) (972-974), the power of the Rashtrakutas declined fast, the last ruler being overthrown by Tailapa II of the Chalukyas of Kalyani.

The Rashtrakutas thus dominated over the Deccan and the South for more than two centuries. They made the Northern kings feel the power of their arms many a time. They improved the efficiency of their administration. Art, literature and religion flourished under their patronage.

THE LATER CHALUKYAS:

Descending from the line of the Badami Chalukyas, Taila established this dynasty in 973 after overthrowing the last Rashtrakuta ruler Kakka II. Taila II defeated the Cholas, the ruler of Chedi, Mulraja of Gujarat and Munja of Malwa. Satyashraya (997-1008) and Vikramaditya V (1009-1018) followed him in succession. But Jayasimha II who came to power in 1018 again defeated Raja Bhoja, the Cheras and subdued all the rulers in seven Konkanas. He lived in Kolhapur and abdicated the throne in 1040. He was succeeded by Someshvara, *Ahavamalla* (*Trailokyamalla*) who ruled from 1040 to 1068. He further conquered the rulers of Kanchi and Kanyakubja (Kanauj) in the North. Someshvara founded the city of Kalyani and made it his capital. Of his three sons, Someshvara II the eldest one was made *Yuvaraja* and installed on the throne in 1068. And within a year the King Someshvara I ended his life by *Jalasamadhi* in the Tungabhadra (1069). Someshvara II ruled for a few years and the throne was usurped by the younger brother Vikramaditya VI in 1076, who ruled up to 1126.

Vikramaditya VI was certainly the greatest ruler of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. He restored the prestige and glory of the Chalukyas by his extensive exploits. He subdued the Hoysalas, the Cholas and all his feudatories in the South. In the North, he conquered Malwa, Bengal and Assam. He started a new era known as Chalukya Vikrama Samvat (1076). Bilhana from Kashmir settled

in the court of Vikramaditya VI and wrote his work — *Vikamankadevacharita*, recounting the exploits of this Chalukyan Emperor in an epic style. Vinjaneshwara the author of the *Mitakshara* lived in his court. He built many temples and the city of Vikramapura. After Vikramaditya VI the glory of the Chalukyas declined soon. The last ruler Taila III was overpowered by the Yadavas of Devagiri, by the close of the twelfth century.

The Chalukyas of Kalyani dominated the politics of the Deccan for more than 200 years. They were brave and extended their sway over a wide area both in the North and the South. The Chalukyas distinguished themselves as patrons of learning and architecture.

The Chalukyas of Vengi (Eastern) reigned from the days of Pulakeshi II of Badami up to the end of the 11th century when their kingdom was united with that of the Cholas. They were always involved in wars and their rule was of varying fortune. Their contribution to culture is usually included in that of the other two Chalukya lines.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

The brief review of the political events given above clearly brings out some broad features of the Deccan Kingdoms that are similar to those of the Northern ones. The Deccan was governed by a number of dynasties of varying length and strength. There were numerous smaller houses of feudatory kings. As in the North, the king was primarily a conqueror whose accepted ideal was to enhance his personal or family honour by conquering other kingdoms, constructing temples and protecting the society. The society, as in the North, did not depend upon the rulers for its organisation. The social order had its roots in the *Dharma*. The typical Indian attitude towards political organisation, at least in the ancient times, was one of indifference.

> The ruler had ordinarily little control over the numerous social, economic and religious organisations of the people, except by way of dispensing justice when disputes were brought before him or his courts.

> The details of the daily life of the people were looked after by numberless autonomous groups and associations bound by ties of locality, caste, occupation or religious persuasion. (K. A. N. Shastri).

This is better ilustrated by the conditions that prevailed in the Deccan and the South than those in the North. The villages in the Deccan and South were self-sufficient and autonomous. The political upheavals had little effect on the society.

While all the dynasties successively established their sway over a wide area, there never was a single system of administration at any time for the whole of Deccan. Kings and feudatories paid tributes to the conquering emperor and continued to be autonomous within their territories. All states conformed to an uniform type of monarchy as in the North. The king was the head of the state, with all the powers formally concentrated in him. There is no reference to the divinity of the king, inspite of their grand titles. The autocracy of the king was modified by several other factors. All members of the royal family, including ladies, participated in the administration. There were ministers and other high officials who influenced the king by their noble descent, ability and character. The direct administration of the king was confined to a much smaller area, and many feudatories were autonomous within their territories. Moreover the scope of the kingly authority was limited by the numerous corporate organisations in the society. Every king, above all, was guided by a preceptor (guru) who saw to it that the king acted according to the *Dharma.*

There was a special body of confidential soldiers who shared a meal with the king at the time of his accession and were sworn to defend him with their lives on all occasions. They were known as *Sahavashis* under the Chalūkyas.

There is no mention of a central *Sabha* or *Mantriparishad,* while ministers in charge of various departments like military, public works, finances, charity etc. are mentioned in the inscriptions as well as in literature. There is a mention of "*Sarvadhikari*" (Gangas), "*Maha Praddhan*" or "*Sachiva*" (*Chalukyas*). These are interpreted as "Prime Minister."

The kingdom was divided into provinces, districts, talukas, and villages. Various terms such as *Rashtrapati*, *Vishayapati*,

Gramakuta, Ayuktaka, Niyuktaka, Adhikunika, Mahattaras, Nada Hegade etc. are used in the inscriptions to denote the various territorial officers. Towns and villages were administered by assemblies. Collection of taxes, sanitation, peace and order, census, records, justice etc. all were looked after by the assembly.

The autonomy of the villages is clearly recorded in the inscriptions. The administration in respect of taxes, records, police-duties, etc. was carried by a local headman (*Gowda, Gavunda*), which office was usually hereditary. But the voice of the people was very effective, expressed through the village assembly, known as *Mahajana.*

> Each village in Karnataka and Maharashtra had a popular council on which every adult householder was represented. There were no formal elections held as in the Tamila country, but the elders of the village (*Grama Mahajunas* or *Grama Mahattaras*) used informally to appoint sub-committees to manage local schools, tanks, temples, and roads. (**Altekar**).

The *Mahajanas* used to act as trustees of the public properties and also administer justice. A foreign visitor, Sullaiman has recorded that there were "popular courts" in addition to the king's court. In addition to the usual land tax, there were local voluntary taxes on professions, trades, etc. to maintain temples, tanks, feeding houses, schools and colleges and hospitals for which large donations were given by merchants.

Social and Economic Conditions:

The society was organised on the basis of the *Varnashrama.* Castes were properly organised and played an important part in retaining social solidarity. The remarks made in the last Chapter on the caste-system hold good in respect of the caste-system in the Deccan also. The only notable feature is that there was not much of the foreign element in the population in the Deccan during this period. There is no reference in the contemporary literature to racial mixture, Inter-caste marriages, especially *anuloma,* were common. The unity and harmony of the society were perfectly maintained by the tolerant religious policy of the rulers as well as of the elders of the respective caste organisations.

As a rule there were joint families. Partition and division of property are mentioned. Usually the family was partriarchal and patrilineal but women too had the right to property. Widows were not allowed to remarry among the Brahmanas and upper classes, but among other classes widow-remarriage was fairly common. Chastity and fidelity were their highest ideals. *Sati* was fairly common. Numerous villages have stone-slabs erected in honour of the *Mahasati* who either died with her husband in war or burnt herself in her husband's funeral pyre. The stones were styled as *Viragallu* and *Mastigallu*.

The women enjoyed an honourable position in society. We find numerous instances of women who were administrators, fighters, wrestlers and scholars. Akkadevi, sister of Jayasinha Chalukya earned the proud title *Ranabhairavi* by her heroism on the battle-field. Queens of Vikramaditya acted as Provincial Governors. Some queens usually accompanied the kings on military campaigns. Amoghavarsha I was born in a camp on the return journey of his father from the North Indian campaign. "A mistress of the Chalukya Vijayaditya of Badami, Vinapotigal by name, performed the *Hiranyagarbha* at Mahakuta and presented to the deity a pedestal, set with rubies, with a silver umbrella over it." Women formed an important part of the royal establishment. Royal courtesans were sent as emissaries to the courts of the feudatories.

Education was fairly wide spread among women. Gangadevi, Tirumalamba, Ramabhadramba, Vijjika, were famous scholars and poetesses. Women were well-versed in fine arts like painting, music and dancing. Drama and poetry were the usual forms of literature popular among them.

Dress of the upper class people was fairly attractive and the ornaments were popular. The contemporary literature refers to various types of dresses and ornaments of gold, silver and precious stones. Idols in the temples, and even horses of kings and lords were adorned with ornaments. The food habits were the same as those in the North. Brahmanas, Buddhists, Jainas, etc. were strictly vegetarians. Others used meat freely.

The general pattern of life was pleasant with numerous means of recreation and entertainments. Festivals and rituals were cele-

brated with pomp and display. There is no reference to famine or scarcity in the literature of the period.

The economic prosperity of the period is attested by the numerous guilds and associations of craftsmen and merchants. Of the several places mentioned in the inscriptions, Lakshmeshwar, Mulgund, Belgaum, Dambal, Hangal, Malpe, Mangalur, were important centres of trade and commerce. Lavish donations made to the temples, *Viharas* and other charitable institutions are recorded in the inscriptions. The number of temples and *Viharas* built is big enough to prove the prosperity of the period. Several taxes, octroi and cesses on trade and professions indicate the thriving economic activities. Foreign trade with Western countries was developed since ancient times. Of the important trade centres in South India mentioned by Ptolemy and the *Periplus*, about 75 are located in the southern Deccan. Cotton, indigo, metal products, precious stones and leather goods were exported and horses, gold, dates, wine, singing boys and girls, cloves, etc. were imported. Coinage was also well developed, as seen from coins of the various dynasties.

> Roads were maintained in good order. All important trade centres were connected by roads. Communication between several provinces does not appear to have been very difficult. Benefactions of persons residing in Vaijayanti (Banavasi) and Soparaka or Suparaka, are recorded in the cave at Karli; of Nasik merchant at Junnar; of natives of Northern India; and Dattamirtri, situated in lower Sindh, at Nasik; and of an oil-man of Karhataka at Kudem. On the other hand gifts of natives of Nasik and Karhad are recorded on the *stupa* at Barhut which lies midway between Jubbalpur and Allahabad. —(R. G. Bhandarkar).

The stability of social conditions and economic prosperity promoted education and religious harmony. We hear of several educational centres, big and small. *Agraharas* were spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Higher education in philosophy, literature, and all other sciences was given at such centres. Banavasi, Manyakheta, Kalyani, Badami, Halebidu, Paithana, Nasik, Belgaum, are some of the famous centres of learning mentioned in the epigraphical and literary sources. The *Brahmapuris* and *Ghatikas* were other types of educational bodies. A flourishing college at Salatgi attracted students from different parts of the country. The *Viharas* were numerous. The kings and members of the royal

and feudatory houses received special education in literature, polity, fine arts and war-crafts. Every royal household had a '*guru*' to guide all the affairs. Adult education or social education was given by means of *Puranas* and epics that were read and explained by learned scholars, who freely commented on current social and religious problems. Temples were important centres of social life. Technical or vocational education was given by individual craftsmen.

RELIGION:

Hinduism was the predominant religion throughout the Deccan. Many dynasties revived the ancient religion, while some of them favoured Buddhism and Jainism. The revival of Brahmanism by Shankaracharya was started in the Deccan. All the kings of the Deccan followed a uniformly tolerant policy. They never tried to force their personal beliefs on the people. The literature of the period does not refer to even a single act of religious persecution. Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Jainas received equal patronage.

Temples were important features of this period. It was an institution of religion, education and culture. Some temples had permanent arrangements to promote arts and literature, by large estates attached to them. Pilgrimage and rituals were the other two important features of all the sects. Sacrifice is not heard of, except some performed by the conquering kings. *Bhakti* and mysticism developed in the Deccan along with other schools of philosophy. The contribution of the Deccan to the devotional and philosophical literature is really great. All the great *Acharyas*, saints *Haridasas* and mystics who became famous all over India flourished in the Deccan and the South.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

The early inscriptions of the Kadambas were written in Prakrit but soon they changed to Sanskrit. It continued to be the language of the learned which was extensively used in the inscriptions and literature. Along with Sanskrit two more languages, Marathi and Kannada, were in use in the Deccan. Maharashtri Prakrit was a spoken language since the period of the Shatavahanas and it was used for songs and ballads. The 17th king of the Shatavahanas,

Hala, compiled the *Gatha Saptashati*, comprising 700 stanzas selected from the vast treasury of current Prakrit folk poetry. Prakrit continued to be a spoken language till about the end of the 6th century. The language spoken thenceforth is styled as Apabhramsha which later evolved into Marathi. The Maharashtri Prakrit was spoken in the northernmost part of the Deccan. It gradually spread southwards. It enriched itself by freely drawing the words from Sanskrit, Prakrit and Kannada. The Yadavas of Devagiri patronised Marathi. But during the period from the rise of the Kadambas in the middle of the 4th century to the end of the 11th century, Kannada was the spoken as well as literary language in the territory between the Godavari and the Kaveri. The earliest inscription in Kannada, the Halmidi, is of the 5th century A.D. and the first available literary work "*Kavirajamarga*" is attributed to Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I of the Rashtrakutas, (813-880). This work is a rhetoric, dealing with science of poetry and its history. Several earlier poets and authors are mentioned but their works are not available. It is quite clear that the Kannada acquired all the features of a well developed language, such as script, grammar and prosody as well as a rich vocabulary, by the 9th century. Therefore it must have been a spoken and a literary language much earlier. Scholars hold the view that Kannada must have had a simultaneous development with Tamil, the most ancient Dravidian language.

Sanskrit:

Vijayabhattarika, the queen of Chandraditya (son of Pulakeshi II) wrote in Sanskrit a poetical work, under the pen name *Vijayanka* or *Vijjika*. She described herself as a dark *Saraswati*, and her work, though available in parts, justifies her claim. Rajashekhara admired the work. Trivikramabhatta composed the *Nala-champu* during the reign of Indra III of the Rashtrakutas. *Madalasa Champu* is also attributed to the same author. Somadevasuri, a great Jainaacharya wrote several important works in Sanskrit of which *Yashastilaka Champu* and *Nitivakyamrita* are most famous. Soddhala, of Lata wrote a romance *Udaya Sundari Katha* by 1000. Bilhana of the court of Chalukya Vikramaditya VI has been already noted. Chalukya Someshwar III, composed a sort of cyclopaedia, *Manasollasa*, also known as *Abhilashitartha-chintamani*. Though belonging

to a later period, Madhava Bhatta's *Raghava-Pandaviya* deserves to be mentioned. The author narrates both the great epics simultaneously by means of verses each with a double meaning.

The *Balakrida* of Visharupa and the *Mitakshara* of Vijnaneshvara are the two important commentaries on the *Yajnavalkyasmriti* written during this period.

The books on fine arts were: *Sangita Chudamani* of Chalukya Jagadekamalla, *Sangitaratnakara* of Sharangadeva and *Nritya-ratnavali* of Harapala-deva Chalukya.

Kannada:

Durvinita, the Ganga ruler, Vardhadeva of Tumblur and Shyamakundacharya were Jaina authors who wrote in Kannada during the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. But their works are not available. *Kavirajamarga* of Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I is the earliest known work in this language. Some scholars place *Vadda-radhane*, a Jaina legend, earlier than *Kavirajamarga*. Pampa, who is still regarded as the greatest Kannada poet and the first poet as well, wrote *Adi Purana*, and *Vikramarjuna Vijaya* (*Pampa Bharata*) in 941. *Adi Purana* is the lengend of the first *Tirthankara*. The second work deals with a section of *Mahabharata* where Pampa's patron, Arikesari II (a feudatory of Krishna III) is compared to Arjuna. Ponna or Honna was a junior contemporary of Pampa. He composed *Shantipurana* and *Jinaksharamale*. Ranna (982) was another famous poet of the period under the patronage of Chalukya Taila II. His *Ajita Purana* is a *champu* on the life of the 2nd *Tirthankara* while his *Gadayuddha* or *Sahasabhimavijaya* narrates the story of the fight between Bhima and Duryodhana. Ranna occupies a very high place among the Kannada poets. *Rannakanda*, a verse lexicon is attributed to him. Chavundaraya, wrote a *Purana* of 64 Jaina saints including 24 *Tirthankaras*. Nagavarma's *Chhandombudhi*, a work on prosody and *Karnataka Kadambari* belong to this period. *Panchatantra* of Durgasinha, a minister of Jayasimha II was composed on the 'basis of *Brihatkatha* of Gunadhya. Chandraraja's *Madanatilaka* is a work on erotics. *Jathatilaka* of Shridharacharya is a work on astronomy. Nagachandra, Andayya, Nagavarma II, Janna are other poets and authors who thrived in the 11th and 12th centuries.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

The excellence of the period is its achievement in the field of art and architecture. Fine arts like music, dancing and painting had reached a high standard. The Chalukyas were great lovers of art and generously patronised architcture. The high tradition of art was kept up as can be seen from the many surviving examples. Both Ajanta and Ellora were situated within the empire of the Chalukyas. They added quite a few things to it.

The rock-architecture reached its zenith during this century. In a hill near Aurangabad there are three groups of Buddhist cave temples of the 6th and 7th centuries and some of the figures of gods and saints are quite remarkable for their life-like potrayal of the dress, head dress and ornaments of the period. This style of cave-temple was used for their own gods by the Chalukyas. Mangalesha built a cave temple of Vishnu at Badami by the end of the 6th century. Some of the *Chaitya* Halls of the later period i.e. 6th and 7th century were executed by the Chalukyas.

The first example of the rock-architecture is the temple of Kailas at Ellora. It is a huge monolithic temple which stands in a class by itself, a whole temple carved out of a single rock. This was followed by the five sculptures of Dashavatara, Ravanan-ka-khai and Rameshwar all of the *Vihara* type at Ellora. The Elephanta caves with the trimurti and the Jogeshvari temple also belong to this period. A Jaina temple, *Chchota* Kailas, is also built at Ellora in the same style and four others of the different styles. Of all these, Kailas temple is undoubtedly the best.

The Chalukya style of constructing temples is represented by the Megut Shiva temple, the Aihole Vishnu temple, the Patadkal Virupaksha and two other temples. In fact, the Hindu temple architecture begins in the South with the Chalukyas. The temple of Shiva at Megut is known for its perfect construction and contains the *prashasti* by Ravikirti, the court-poet of Pulakeshi II. There is also a half finished Jaina temple, in the same place. The Vishnu temple at Aihole is built in stone on a rock in the Buddhist Chaitya style. Its sculpture is fine. "The two superb high flying Devas are excellent in design and execution." It contains an

inscription of Vikramaditya II. The Virupaksha temple at Patadkal, according to Havell, "combines the stateliness of the classical design of Europe with fervid imagination of Gothic art." The Papanatha and the Sangameshwar are two other temples at Patadkal. The first is built in the northern and the second in the southern style. There are many more temples at Badami, Aihole, Patadkal and other places nearby.

The architecture of the later Chalukyas was more refined and led to the Hoysala art. The temples of later Chalukya period are spread all over Karnataka. The Kashi Vishveshwara temple at Lakkundi, Mahadeva temple at Itagi, and the others at Gadag, Kuruwatti, Haveri, Hangal, Bankapur, etc. are known for their splendour and skilled carving. Of these again, the Saraswati temple at Gadag and the Sangameshwara temple at Kurwatti deserve special praise.

The Kadambas who ruled earlier than the Chalukyas have left some fine examples of temple architecture. The Lakshmi Narayana temple at Halsi and the Durga temple in Sorab are outstanding. The Madanikas and the dancing girls carved in the temple are simply exquisite. There are some other examples at Banavasi, Hangal and Sirsi.

SUMMARY

THE KADAMBAS:

Founded by Mayurasharma, a veteran Brahmana, the dynasty of the Kadambas was in power from about 345 to about 650 A.D. With their capital at Banavasi, the Kadambas extended their empire over an extensive area. Later on, the branches of the Kadambas ruled in Tri-Parvata, Ucchangi, Hanagal and Goa.

Of the rulers of this dynasty, Kakutsthavarma was a wise statesman who maintained friendly relations with both the Vakatakas and the Guptas.

The Kadambas were patrons of religion and culture. The temples at Banavasi, constructed under their patronage, are praised by art critics.

THE GANGAS:

The Gangas were in power from about the 4th century to 10th century A.D. The founder of this dynasty was Kankanavarma. His successor,

Madhava, was a great scholar, while Vishnugopa, another king of this line, was also a great ruler. Durvinita was a great ruler and also a Jain scholar. He is accredited with a few works in Sanskrit and Kannada. The famous gigantic statue of Gomateshwara was erected during the regime of the Gangas.

THE CHALUKYAS OF BADAMI:

According to the Aihole inscription, Jayasimha was the founder of this dynasty. The Chalukyas ruled gloriously over the whole of the Deccan for about 200 years. Of the several rulers of this dynasty, Pulakeshi I and Pulakeshi II were great. Both of them conquered the whole of the Deccan and a considerable portion of the South. Pulakeshi II extended his kingdom northwards by defeating the rulers of Gujarat, Malwa and the most famous Harshavardhana of Kanauj. He had diplomatic relations with Persia. Hiuen Tsang visited the court of Pulakeshi II and has recorded an appreciative account of the ruler and the prince. Vikramaditya I, Vikramaditya II and Kirtivarma II were other great rulers of this dynasty. During the regime of the Chalukyas, literature, art and architecture progressed and religious harmony was maintained.

THE RASHTRAKUTAS:

The Rashtrakutas came to power in the early part of the 8th century and dominated the Deccan for more than two centuries. Dantidurga, Govinda III, Amoghavarsha I and Krishna III, were the more known rulers of this dynasty. They not only conquered a vast area in the Deccan and the South, but also made frequent inroads in the North and humbled north Indian rulers. Art, literature and religion were patronised by the rulers of this dynasty.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

The political order did not change much. The ruler aspired to be a conqueror but did not interfere with the social order. He had ordinarily little control over the numerous social, economic and religious organisations of the people. The daily life of the people was regulated by autonomous groups and associations bound by ties of locality, caste, occupation or religion.

The kingdom was divided into many divisions with the village as the primary unit. The village continued to be autonomous and was governed

by a body of elders known as *Mahajana* and *Mahattara*. This body looked after taxes, records, education, police duties and administration of justice.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE:

The society was organised on the basis of *varnashrama* and castes were an important factor in retaining its solidarity. The unity and harmony of the society were perfectly maintained by the tolerant religious policy of the rulers as well as that of the elders of the respective caste organisations.

The prosperity of the period is attested by the numerous guilds and associations of craftsmen and merchants. The number of temples and charitable institutions during this period is big enough to prove its undoubted prosperity. Trade with Western countries was brisk and prosperous. Roads were in good order and merchants were generous. Educational institutions, temples, *viharas* were generously patronised by the royal family and by merchants.

RELIGION:

Though Hinduism was the predominant religion, some rulers favoured Buddhism and Jainism. Jaina poets and scholars were encouraged. The temple as an institution of religion, education and culture played an important role. Pilgrimage, rituals, and charity, were the other important religious functions.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE:

Sanskrit:

Of the famous scholars of the period, mention must be made of Vijayabhattarika, a queen of the Chalukyas, Somadevasuri, Trivikramabhatta and Bilhana, the author of *Vikramankadevacharita*. Someshvara III, a Chalukya king composed an encyclopaedia, *Manasollasa*.

Kannada:

Kavirajamarga of Nrupatunga is considered as the earliest known work in Kannada. Pampa, Ranna and Ponna (Honna) are great epic-poets who are considered *Kavichakravartis*. There are a few Jaina poets who wrote legendary poems.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

The most important contribution of this period is towards the development of unique styles in art and architecture. Both Ajanta and Ellora are situated within the empire of the Chalukyas and they initiated a style of their own in architecture. Of the cave-temples, the most important is the Kailasa at Ellora. A number of stone temples were built at Aihole, Pattadakal, Gadag, Banavasi and other places.

11

THE SOUTH

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE SOUTH — THE PALLAVAS — THE CHOLAS — THE PANDYAS — THE CHERAS — CIVILIZATION

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE SOUTH:

THE region to the South of the Krishna extending upto the *Kanya Kumari* is South India. Since ancient times, Dravidas occupied it and they retained, though affected by the civilization of the Aryas of the North, some peculiarities of their language, literature, society and architecture. The earliest and the principal language of the region is Tamila and hence the country was known as Tamila (Dravida) country. But Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam gradually separated themselves and the country divided accordingly.

Next to their mention in the inscription of Ashoka and the writings of the ancient Greeks, the Tamila states are referred to in the writing of Ptolemy and the *Periplus*. But a good account of their rulers, society and culture is found in the earliest Tamila (*Sangam*) literature of the first century of Christian era. The *Sangam* literature has two anthologies: *Ettuttogai* (Eight Branches) and *Pattupattu* (Ten Songs). The first contains about 30,000 lines

of poetry on various subjects neatly arranged in eight groups. The second is equally lengthy.

Senguttuvan, according to these poems, was a Chera King of the 2nd century A.D. Karikala was the contemporary of this king, ruling over the Cholas. Karikala was a great warrior and made the Chola state supreme in the Tamila country. He occupied a large territory upto the Kaveri. Kaveripattanam and Pondichery, the two ports of the period, were in his dominions. The recent discovery of a Roman 'factory' of the first century A.D. supports this fact. Nedunjaliyan, the Pandya and Tondaiman of Kanchi are also mentioned in the Tamila literature.

The description of the social and political institutions is given in these poems. Kings were powerful and appointed the *Yavana* soldiers as watchmen in their palaces. Agriculture was the main occupation but industry and trade were prosperous. Inland as well as foreign trade was brisk. Fine cloth, pearls, pepper, spices, etc. were exported to the Western countries upto Rome. Roman and Greek merchants came to India in large numbers and founded small colonies in important cities. A temple of August was built at Muziris (Cranganore). The discovery of Roman coins of gold and silver in large numbers indicates the large volume of trade. References are found in the writings of Strabo, in the Greek farces, and the *Periplus* and Ptolemy's Geography. Several words of the Dravida origin are found in them and the places mentioned by them are identified fully. They are all located in the Deccan and the South.

This prosperous period, however, comes to a decline by the end of the 3rd century A.D. Since then for about three centuries, the history of the Tamila land is unknown. There is a long gap in the history of the South from the *Sangam* age to the middle of the 6th century A.D. However, a new dynasty of the Pallavas was established at Kanchi immediately after the collapse of the Andhra Shatavahana empire. The Pallavas came to power by the beginning of the 4th century A.D. and their rise to glory may be traced from the 6th century A.D. The Pandya Kingdom revived its power by the same time. The only information about political history of the Tamila states during this dark period is that, about

550 A.D. a mysterious tribe, Kalabhras suddenly came to power. They are mentioned in the Buddhist works and also in the late Tamila literature. They are described as the evil kings of the Tamilians. The king, Achchuta Vikkanta was Buddhist and ruled over the Cholas. He is reputed to have imprisoned three crowned monarchs of Chera, Chola and Pandya States. He was a patron of Buddhism. But nothing more is known about the Kalabhras. Their rule came to an end on account of the rising power of the Pallavas and the Pandyas.

THE PALLAVAS:

The origin of the Pallavas is controversial. Some scholars think that they might be associated with the Iranian Pahlavis. Except the similarity in names, Pallavas had little in common with the Pahlavis. The generally accepted view is that the Pallavas were rulers of North Indian origin and acquired the name, Pallavas, by their occupation of Kanchipuram and the area surrounding it, which was known as *Tondai* in Tamila. The word *Pallava* (Sprout) must be the Prakrit-Sanskrit rendering of *Tondai* (creeper) ; The rulers of Kanchi were known as *Tondaimans*, even before the advent of the Pallavas.

The earliest ruler of the Pallava dynasty was Simhavarma. His inscription at Palnad is in Prakrit and says that he belonged to the Bharadvaja *gotra*. The next ruler known to history is Skandavarma who was a *Dharma-Mahadhiraja* and performed *Agnishtoma*, *Vajapeya* and *Ashvamedha* sacrifices. He made Kanchi his capital and extended his kingdom upto the Krishna in the North and the Western Sea in the West. Buddhavarma, son of Skandavarma assisted his father in administration. Skandavarma is placed in the latter part of the 3rd century A.D. till which period Prakrit was the official language in the South.

Vishnugopa is the next famous Pallava ruler. He resisted Samudra Gupta's advance into the South and sent him back. The history of the Pallavas after Vishnugopa becomes confused. Probably a second house was started by another Pallava. Their

charters are in Sanskrit and are issued from different places. Some scholars think that Pallavas during this period must have lost their hold on Kanchipuram. However, the Pallava power was revived by Simhavishnu, the founder of the new dynasty.

Simhavishnu ruled from about 575-600 A.D. He conquered the country upto the Kaveri and adopted the title "*Avanisinha.*" He also claims to have defeated the King of Ceylon several times. He was succeeded by his son Mahendravarma I.

Mahendravarma I (609-625) suffered severe defeats at the hands of Chalukya Pulakeshi II. The territory of Vengi was lost to Pulakeshi who sent his brother there to start the line of the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi.

The Pallavas turned their attention to the South and occupied Trichinopoly, where Mahendravarma constructed many rock-cut temples. He also erected similar temples in the districts of Chinglepet and Arcot. He has the credit of building the temples of Brahma, Vishnu and Ishvara. A large tank, named after him was constructed by him together with a rock-cut temple of Vishnu on its bank. Mahendravarma was converted from Jainism to Shaivism by the famous saint, Appar.

Narasinhavarma I (625-645) continued the war with Pulakeshi II. He invaded the Chalukya territory, killed its great ruler in the battle and captured their capital Vatapi, for about 13 years. This victory was promptly recorded by the Pallava king in an inscription at Badami. He is described as *Mahamalla* (Great Hero).

Hiuen Tsang the famous Chinese pilgrim visited Kanchi and stayed there for a few years during the reign of Narasimha. The city, Kanchipuram, was a large one, of about five or six miles in circumference. The country was known as Dravida and he estimates its area at 1,000 miles in circuit. There were 100 Buddhist monasteries with 10,000 monks, and about 40 Jaina temples, in the capital. It was, indeed, a sacred city of Hindus, with many temples. It was also a great educational centre, the birthplace of the Great Buddhist scholar, Dharmapala, the rector of Nalanda. The Mahamalla Narasimha built a town on the sea-beach and named it after himself, Mahamallapura. He seems to

have added considerably to the already numerous temples of Kanchi, notably the Dharmaraja Ratha.

Parameshwaravarma, grandson of Narasimha lost his capital to the Chalukyas prince Vikramaditya I, but seems to have recovered it soon. A devotee of Shiva, he built a number of temples. Narasimhavarma II (670-720) the next ruler, was lucky to have peace with his enemies. He was a patron of literature and built the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi. He had the title *Rajasimha.* The celebrated Sanskrit author, Dandin, spent many years at his court.

By the first quarter of the 8th century, Nandivarma, a descendant of Bhimavarma, (a brother of the founder of Pallava dynasty) ascended this throne. Again the capital was lost to the Chalukyas and recovered by Nandivarma II. He had to fight against the rising powers of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan and the Pandyas in the South.

Nandivarma II was elected to the throne by the ministers of the kingdom, the *ghatika* (a local university) and the people of the city, as his predecessor, Parameshwar Varma II (720-33) had died without an heir. Ascending the throne at the age of twelve, Nandivarma ruled for more than 60 years, inspite of the powerful enemies around. Udayachandra, the able general stood by his young master and won many a battle to make the throne secure for him. However, the Chalukya Vikramaditya II captured Kanchi about 740 and engraved a Kannada inscription in the Kailasanatha temple, just to remove the stain of defeat inflicted by the Pallava ruler Nandivarma I, recorded at Badami. He immediately withdrew from Kanchi. His son Yuvaraja Kirtivarma II raided once again and carried a large booty of gold, jewellery and elephants. But Nandivarma II also fought with the Rashtrakutas and the Pandyas. He had the title *Pallava-malla.* A worshipper of Vishnu, he built the temple, Vaikunthaperumal, at Kanchi and several others. He was a patron of learning and the great Vaishnava saint Tirumangai lived during his reign (733-795). Dantivarma, his son, succeeded him and ruled upto 844. In his struggle with the Rashtrakutas and the Pandyas Dantivarma lost much of his territory. But he was lucky to be a

contemporary of Sundaramurti, a famous saint and his companion, Cheraman Peruman, King of Kerala, the leading Shaiva *Nayanars* of the time.

Nandivarma III (844-866) concluded alliances with the Gangas, the Cholas, the Rashtrakutas and the Ceylonese in fighting the rising Pandyas. He inflicted a severe defeat on the Pandya king. But the Pandya seems to have recovered his prestige by a return defeat.

Nandivarma III had a powerful fleet. He had married the daughter of Amoghavarsha I of the Rashtrakutas. A temple of Vishnu and a big tank were built by him. He was succeeded by his son Nripatunga who avenged his father's defeat by defeating the Pandya king and imposing his suzerainty on him. Nripatunga was followed by his son Aparajita who was killed by Aditya I of the Cholas. The kingdom of the Pallavas was annexed by the Cholas in 898. Aparijita was a great builder.

Thus, the long and eventful story of the Pallavas was concluded by the close of the 9th century. Their contribution to literature and architecture has immortalised them. They started colonisation.

CHOLAS:

The Cholas rose to prominence under Vijayalaya (846-871) who continued to be a feudatory of the Pallavas. But his son Aditya I (871-907) killed the last Pallava ruler and established a vast empire of the Cholas. Parantaka I (907-946) defeated the Pandya king and invaded Ceylon. But his son, Rajaditya was killed by the Rashtrakutas. The next ruler, Rajaraja I (985-1082) was the greatest of his dynasty. A great conqueror, Rajaraja humbled the Chalukya of Vengi, the Pandyas of Madura, the Gangas of Mysore, the chiefs of the Malabar coast and the rulers of Kalinga and Ceylon. Thus he brought the entire South under him. With the help of a 'powerful navy, Rajaraja developed into a great sea power and started the conquest of the Indian Archipelago. The system of administration was improved. He

built the Brihadishvar temple at Tanjore, his capital. Inscriptions recording his conquests are found in this temple.

Rajendra Chola I (1012-1042) consolidated the Chola empire and gained a few noteworthy conquests. He humbled the Chalukyas of Kalyani, occupied the Gondawana and conquered the Burmese coast, the Malaya Peninsula, and the Indian Archipelago. He marched through the Gonda, Orissa and Bengal upto the Ganga and assumed the title *Gangaikonda* to signify his conquest over the Ganga region. Lakshadvipa (Laccadives) and Maladvipa (Maladives) as well as the Nicobar Islands were conquered by him.

Rajadhiraja (1042-52) was able to suppress the revolts of the Chera, Pandya and Ceylon princes. But he was killed in a battle (at Koppam) with the western Chalukya Someshwara. His younger brother, Rajendra Deva (1052-63) was crowned in the battlefield itself who continued the battle to victory. He was a powerful ruler and was succeeded by Virarajendra-Virakesari (1063-70). He inflicted another defeat on the Chalukyas at Kudala where the Tungabhadra meets the Krishna. His son, Adhirajendra was killed by the people for his oppressive rule and in 1070 the Chola throne passed to Kulottunga, a prince of the Eastern (Vengi) Chalukyas, and grandson of Rajendra Chola I. Kulottunga was able to subdue the Pandyas and improve the system of administration. After his death in 1118, the Chola empire began to decline and it ended with Rajendra Chola III who ruled upto 1267.

THE PANDYAS:

The Pandyas were the earliest of the South Indian rulers. Mentioned in Ashoka's inscriptions and by Megasthenes, they are found in the history of Rome by Strabo. The Pandya kings issued copper coins with a fish inscribed on them. A Pandya king sent an embassy to Augustus in 20 B.C. Except Nedunjaliyan who is described in the Tamil Sangam literature, no other ruler is known till a very late period. They were dominated by the

Pallavas to the end of the 9th century. Their independence was lost again in the 11th century when the Cholas rose to supremacy. They came to be a leading power only after the downfall of the Cholas in the 13th century. With their capital at Madura, they ruled for about a century.

THE CHERAS:

The ancient state of Chera (Kerala) was little known throughout the historical period. The Cheras were mentioned by the inscriptions of Ashoka. Perunar was a king of Kerala by the beginning of the 1st century A.D. Sengattuwan, another famous king of this dynasty defeated the Cholas twice and established the suremacy of the Cheras but soon they were overpowered by the Pandyas. From the 4th century the Pallavas dominated them and after them, the Cholas kept the Pandyas under their own sway.

CIVILIZATION:

Political Conditions:

The three Tamila states of Chola, Pandya and Kerala were independent till early years of the Christian era. The Andhra-Shatavahanas, the Chalukyas, the Kadambas, the Gangas, the later Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas and the Pallavas dominated over them, in succession, till the rise of the Cholas in the 9th century. The Pallavas had a longer hold on the South during the period under our study. The military activities of these various dynasties and the consequent increasing contact between the peoples of the South and of the Deccan and the North affected the secluded position of the Tamila states. Their government, society and literature were considerably influenced by those of the rest of India. Still, a few of the unique features of the Dravida society are found.

All the states were monarchical, with most features of the

states of Northern India. The king was all powerful, at least in theory, and was primarily a conqueror. Except the Cholas, none of them gave any consideration to administration. That was due to the well-organised society which did not look to the states for anything except protection. The remarkable feature of the South Indian states is the organisation of fully autonomous village communities. Again, as in the Deccan the autocracy of the rulers was checked by the autonomous villages, numerous associations within the society and the presence of feudatory states. The Cholas had, however, a more centralised administration.

The king's establishment was both elaborate and grand. The palace and the capital reflected the majesty of the vast resources of the extensive empire. Coronations were uniformly marked with grandeur and splendour. The Cholas had a system of official chroniclers to record main events of their reign. The king had a secretary in constant attendance to take down his oral orders and give necessary instructions. The body guards were known as *Velaikkarar* under the Cholas and *Apattuvadigal* under the Pandyas. Marco Polo called them as "Companions of Honour." There was also a well organised chancery as part of the royal household.

The ministers worked as a body and exercised considerable influence over the king. The Pallava King Parameshwar II died without an heir. The ministers, the *ghatika* and the people of Kanchi together elected Nandivarma II as their king. So also we find some examples of boy kings who were faithfully protected by their generals and ministers.

The kingdom was divided in *Mandalams* (provinces), *Kottams* (divisions), *Nadus* (districts) and *Kurrams* (groups of villages). Each *mandala* was placed under a governor and the sub-divisions in charge of separate officers. Villages and *Kurrams* were mostly autonomous units. Land-revenue, and taxes such as import duties, octroi, cesses and fines were well-defined. Roads, bridges, irrigation-works, tanks, wells, etc. were constructed by the Public Works Department. Large dams were built to divert the water of rivers for irrigation.

The Tamila inscriptions describe three types of village assem-

blies; the *Ur*, the *Sabha* and the *Nagaram*. The *Ur* was an assembly of all the people. The *Sabha* was the assembly of Brahmanas and the *Nagaram* was the assembly of the merchants and tradesmen. All these often met together for common purposes. The *Kurram* or the union of the villages was administered by a *Mahasabha* or General Assembly, which worked through 8 committees (*variams*) organised for different purposes. The wide scope of authority of the General Assembly can be understood by the functions assigned to these committees. They were (1) Protection of gardens, (2) Maintenance of irrigation tanks, (3) Protection of cultivated fields, (4) General affairs of the village, (5) Accounts, (6) Education, (7) Disposal of lands and (8) Maintenance of roads. The Assembly collected taxes, conducted elections and administered justice. Police were under the control of the assembly. There were separate committees for temples, with hundreds of members on them. Officers, or the members of the royal family were to enter the village or the *Kurram* only with the permission of the Assembly. The village assemblies functioned on similar lines and with equal power. The towns had their own assemblies (*Tasiur* or *Tan-Kuram*). They framed their own constitutions similar to the one described above. The typical autonomy of the townships is illustrated by the fact that Uttaramerur revised its constitution twice in a very short period, to suit local needs. These self-governing local units played a significant role in the preservation of ancient culture.

> The organisation which made for the continuity of life and tradition, held society together, and carried it safe through the storms and turmoils of political revolution, was the autonomous self-sufficient village. It was the primary cell of the body politic and the vitality of its institutions is well attested by hundreds of inscriptions from all parts of the country.

The kings and emperors of the South respected the autonomy of local bodies. They never interfered with their affairs. They lavishly patronised all religions, art, literature and architecture. Kings and queens earned glory for themselves in their donations to the temples and construction of the public works.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

Inspite of their close contact with other parts and their large-scale Aryanisation, the Dravidas did not fully accept all the features of the Hindu Society. The ideals of the *Varnashrama Dharma* appealed to the intellectuals. But the majority of the people engaged in hunting, fishing and cultivation remained largely uninfluenced by it. The Brahmans formed the most respected section in the society, inspite of their poverty. They were generally devoted to religion and learning, even though a few of them entered royal service.

> Hundreds of inscriptions proclaim the continued solicitude of kings, nobles and merchants for the maintenance and encouragement of a class of men who devoted themselves exclusively to learning and teaching, who were capable of detached thinking on all problems of social welfare, and whose presence in every town and village was calculated to provide not only patterns of ethical and religious conduct for the rest of the population, but active helpers and disinterested arbiters in the numerous concerns of their daily life.

The caste entered the South a bit later than the other aspects of life. But soon it was accepted with all its economic and social implications. In the South observance of the caste-rules regarding food, occupation, marriage, etc. was very strict. But at the same time there was perfect harmony and ready co-operation among the people of all sections in local matters. The high efficiency of the local bodies testifies to this statement. Living in separate quarters of a village or towns did not affect the social solidarity. Mixed castes are mentioned in the inscriptions, together with the occupations assigned to each.

The families were joint families. Originally they could have been matriarchal but soon they became patriarchal. In Malabar, there are still families of the matriarchal type where the property passes from the mother to daughter. Women enjoyed a position of honour and respect. They moved freely in society. The ladies of the upper classes were quite accomplished in the fine arts of music and dancing.

Dress and food varied according to the time, place and

class. People of the upper class wore decent and sometimes costly dress while the poor peasants went almost naked. In all other matters such as food, customs, etc., we find such a wide gulf between the classes in the South. This was not solely due to the economic factors. We read of the use of the luxuries of furniture, jugs and other articles even in cottages.

Hunting, fishing, games and others were means of amusement. The Tamila literature has numerous references to the folk songs. A game similar to Polo is described in the records.

Education was organised in *Maths*, *Viharas*, and temples. Sanskrit learning was wide spread. The *agraharars*, *Brahmanapuris* and *Ghatikas* were centres of higher learning in Sanskrit. The *Ghatika* of Kanchi was famous. Jainas and Buddhists thrived and were conducting numerous educational institutions. We read of several colleges at places like Kanchi, Nagai, Ennayiram, Tirumukkudal etc. with endowments given by kings and merchants for the maintenance of hostels for students. A medical college was established at Tiruvaduttarai and a school of Panini's grammar at Tiruvorriyur. Kanchi attracted students from different parts of the country.

The temple was a great centre of social activities. It gave employment to numerous people like architects, priests, poets, musicians, dancing girls, florists, cooks, water-carriers, and a large numbers of others. Festivals and fairs were held to provide for amusement as well as for social harmony. "The temple was a big landlord, bank, school, hospital, fortress and what not." Kings, merchants and the common men lavished their wealth on the temples. They were managed by committees with hundreds of members on them.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people, and the South like the rest of India was a land of villages. Irrigation was well developed. Proper care of cultivated lands and gardens was taken by the village assemblies. Trade and industry added a great deal to the prosperity of the people. Manufacture of carpets, metal goods, pottery, ivory and jewellery articles, etc. were famous. In fact the high technical skill of the South Indian tradesmen and artisans enabled them to control foreign markets,

both in the West and the East. The trade with Western countries upto Rome has been already mentioned. In the East Indian merchants went upto China. Brahmana temples and merchants were found in Canton in 750 A.D. The Cholas sent trade missions to China. The Chinese ships visited Indian ports, occasionally. Indians had their strong hold in the Persian Gulf also. Large numbers of horses were imported from Arabia. The kings of India issued Charters of Security (*Abhayashasanam*) to foreign merchants. Foreign travellers and merchants praised the honesty of the merchants and the officials of the government. Ships were big enough to carry hundreds of men and animals like horses and elephants. A large variety of coins, weights and measures were found. The merchants were organised in their guilds, on which some times, were represented merchants of several countries. The Manigramam, Nanasdesis or Ainurruvar were some of the powerful guilds and they maintained their own armed forces. In the same way pearl-fishery, jewellery, metal-works etc. had their own guilds. The country was no doubt prosperous. The coastal towns were big and full of foreigners.

RELIGION:

In the realm of religion, art and architecture, the South has made a very distinct and significant contribution. In the earliest period, the Dravidas were worshippers of some indigenous gods such as Shiva in the form of *lingam*, the female deity, the tree, water, snake, fish, etc. The fish is still an important deity as can be seen by the existence of the beautiful temple of Minakshi at Madura as well as the several festivals that are observed in honour of the fish. Curiously, the fish is not a common object of worship elsewhere, but it is a link connecting all ancient and pre-historic civilizations. The indigenous cults of the Dravidas were crude, some sects offering blood and toddy to their gods. With the entry of the *Vedic* religion, and later on, of Jainism and Buddhism, the original cults became refined. For a time, at least upto the end of the 4th century the new religions and old cults existed side by side. Early in the 5th century, there arose a

typically Southern movement which influenced the whole of India and gave Hinduism its final form. This movement is known as the *Bhakti* cult. Vishnu and Shiva were given their present high position by their devotees of this cult. The *Nayanars* and *Alwars* propagated, through their devotional hymns, *bhakti* or intense love for God, among the people. This movement spread soon to the other parts in successive stages by the efforts of the Kannada *Dasas* and *Sharanas*, Telugu *Dasas*, the Malayalee Saints, Marathi *Santas*, and the saints of Bengal, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The songs of the saints of the *Bhakti* school constitute the bulk of the real scriptures of Hinduism in addition to the *Puranas* and the Epics. These are available to all, even to men of low caste. The effect of this popular movement on the intellectuals is revealed in their commentaries on the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Sutras*, written during and after this period. Led by the three great *Acharyas*, this movement attained a distinct form of theology and was promptly provided with the requisite philosophy. We hear of numerous saints, both *Shaivas* and *Vaishnavas*, learned scholars and wandering preachers even before the great *Acharyas*. But the *Acharyas* raised the movement to a high status by giving it a consistent philosophical basis. Shankara's *Advaita* philosophy, Madhva's *Dvaita* school and Ramanuja's *Vishishtadvaita* school show an increasing influence of the *Bhakti* cult. Shankara, great as a philosopher, was a staunch devotee of Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti, while Madhva and Ramanuja were equally staunch devotees of Vishnu. All these composed the best of the devotional hymns in Sanskrit. Ramanuja openly admitted untouchables into the temples.

Some of the important features of Hinduism such as the temple, the idol worship, the pilgrimage, the festival, the inevitability of *Guru* for spiritual progress etc. are the direct results of the *Bhakti* movement. The magic of devotion transformed the numerous indigenous crude gods into some of the most beautiful ones. The Epics and the *Puranas* reveal the impact of *Bhakti*. In the *Bhagavadgita* we find *Bhakti*, fully developed into a *yoga* along with *Jnana* and *Karma*.

Jainism was more influential than Buddhism in Karnataka

and Tamila country. Several temples and *Jinalayas*, with *Satras* (free boarding houses) attached to them were built. Buddhism was declining when Hiuen Tsang visited Andhra. But still Buddhist shrines continued to flourish, at Kanchi, Nagapatam and Shrimulavaram.

Islam came to India very soon after its birth, as the trade relations between India and Arabia were old. The Arabs settled in India and their descendants in Malabar are known as *Mappillas (Moplas)*. However, Islam did not influence Hinduism in any way upto the 10th century. Christianity also made its entry into India in the very 1st century A.D. Christian churches were found as early as 6th century. Several Indians were converted to Christianity by the 8th century. By the 13th century, immigrants from Baghdad, Nineve and Jerusalem came to India and added to the strength of this community. So also Zoroastrians, popularly known as *Parsis*, came to India very early. According to the Parsi tradition, the first band of refugees settled in Diu in Kathiawar about the 8th century and then spread to Thana, near Bombay.

India welcomed these non-Indian religions. There was no persecution. On the contrary, some South Indian chiefs encouraged Islam and Christianity.

> Their members quietly pursued their own cults, small but insignificant elements in the religious life at the coastal cities, while the great body of Hindus were scarcely aware of the alien faiths, and in no way antagonistic to them. This capacity for toleration contributed to the characteristic resiliency of Hinduism, and helped to assure its revival (Basham).

LITERATURE:

In addition to the literature in Sanskrit, a considerable amount of literature is found in Tamila, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. A brief survey of the Kannada literature has been already given in the last chapter. Telugu and Malayalam separated from Tamil later than the 10th century A.D. and hence they belong to a later period. Therefore a brief account of the literature in Sanskrit and Tamila is given here.

Sanskrit:

The contributions of the three great Acharyas, Shankar, Madhva and Ramanuja have been already mentioned. In addition to the numerous devotional songs, they are respected for their very valuable commentaries (*Bhashyas*) on the *Sutras*, *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*. They were followed by a large number of distinguished disciples of the three different schools. A number of commentaries on the *Vedic* literature, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, *Upanishads* and *Sutras* were composed during the period from 5th century to the 15th or 16th century. Venkatamadhava, Bhavaswami, Sadgurushishya and Haradatta were some notable scholars of our period. *Bhagavata Purana* and the commentaries on *Vishnu Purana* and *Ramayana* were composed before the 10th century in the South.

The *Nitidvishatika* of Sundar Pandya (earlier than the 7th century) is a valuable contribution to the literature on politics. Kumaradasa, a Ceylonese ruler of the 6th century, wrote a work, *Janakiharana* which ranks high among the best of the Sanskrit works. Two humorous farces, *Mattavilasa* and *Bhagvadajjuka* were composed by Mahendravarma I of the Pallava dynasty. Another ruler of the same house wrote a work on prosody, *Chhandovichiti*. Dandin, the author of *Kavyadarsha* and *Dasakumar-Charita* flourished in the court of the Pallavas. Shaktibhadra has the unique credit of having written the first full-length Sanskrit drama, *Ashcharya Chudamani*. Two more dramas, *Tapati-Samvarana* and *Subhadra-Dhananjaya*, based on two episodes in the *Mahabharata* were written by Kulasekhara, a king of Kerala. *Krishna-karnamrita*, a devotional lyric of Lila-Suka is well-known.

Tamil:

The *Sangam* literature of the early Christian era, *Ettutogai* (eight anthologies) and *Pattupattu* (ten songs) is a large collection, recently discovered, and much of which is still untranslated. But whatever is translated and made available to the rest of the world shows a richness of variety and wealth of descriptive details. There are verses dealing with love and the praise of kings. These verses again refer to the well-defined regions of the Tamila country. The verses of both the anthologies describe several activities

of common men and women, and conditions of the country. There are some lovely songs describing the beautiful nature, sea, parting of fishermen's wives, of battles and the like. The initial rhyme or assonance is a unique feature of Tamila poetry. The realistic tenor of the early Tamila poetry may be seen by two small verses: A girl speaks to her play-mate:

What bright bracelets you have! Do listen!
As I was playing in the road
He kicked over my mud castle with his foot,
And snatched the garland from my head,
And ran away with my striped ball.
How he teased me, the naughty boy!
. . . .
And finally, he made friends with a smile.

A village festival:

The farmers who harvest rice in the hot sun
Now leap into the waves of the clear sea.
The sailors, captains of stout craft,
Drink strong liquor and dance for joy,
As they clasp the bright-bangled hands of women
Who wear garlands of clustering *punnai*...

(quoted by Basham)

The next group of works known as the 18 minor works, (*Padinenkilkanakku*) show an intimate contact with the Aryan ideals and Jaina influence as well. Two of them, *Tirukkural* and *Naladiyar* are famous. The former one, *Kural* is a collection of brief verses like the *Sutras*. For example,

"Love is stronger than wine,
For the very thought of it intoxicates."

They are also regarded as the chief source of moral ideas. "A positive ethic of love and forgiveness is a feature of much Tamil sacred literature." For example,

Men without love think only of self
But the loving strip themselves to the bone for others
The joy of the avenger lasts but a day,
The joy of the peacemaker lasts for ever.

They are great who fast and do penance
But they who forgive wrongs are even greater
This, they say, is the highest wisdom —
To return no harm to them that harm you

Similar thoughts and sentiments are expressed in the other work, *Naladiyar*, in a more formal style, for instance,

Better hatred than the friendship of fools,
Better death than chronic illness
Better to be killed than soul-destroying contempt
Better abuse than promise undeserved
True house keeping is to eat a meal
Sharing as far as may be, with friend and foe alike
The useless men who eat their food alone
Will never pass the gate of heaven.

By the 6th century A.D. the Tamila land was almost completely Aryanised. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism had penetrated into it. So also Sanskrit influenced Tamil poetry. But still, it retained its realistic approach to the life of the ordinary people. The earliest and greatest epic, "The Jewelled Anklet" (*Silappadikaram*) is an illustration of this statement. It deals with the life and love-affair of Kolvalan, a son of a wealthy merchant. Kannagi his wife and Madavi his love, are beautifully portrayed. This was followed by another epic, '*Manimegalai*' a sort of supplement to the former. The second one was obviously written to propagate the principles of Buddhism. Still another epic '*Sivaga-Sindamani*' definitely a later one, deals with the life of a superman who excels in every art and science. The *Ramayana* was translated by Kamban who raises Ravana to the proportion of a great hero, though his Rama is still greater.

The real glory of Tamila literature is in the works of the Shaiva and Vaishnava saints of the *Bhakti* school. The *Nayanars* and *Alwars* were the best among the composers of the devotional hymns. They reveal an intense love of God reflected by the devotee in his love for his fellow beings. This is a unique message of the Tamila word *anbu* which means something more than love.

Besides these, there are several works on grammar, prosody, and other sciences. Several Puranas and commentaries were also written.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

In the rěalm of music and dance, the South developed its own schools known as *Karnataki* or *Dakshinadi* in music and *Bharatnatyam* in dance. *Yakshagana*, *Bayalata*, etc., were the original forms of drama that flourished in the Kannada districts. The Pallavas and Cholas were great lovers and patrons of literature, art and architecture.

During the first phase of the Pallava architecture known as Mahendra style, we find the rock-cut temples with pillared *Mandapas*. They are built without brick, timber, metals or mortar. Such temples are found at Mandagupattu, Trichonopoly and Bhairavakonda. Narasimha (Mahamalla) developed this into a style of his own, examples of which are found at Mahamallapuram. There is a vast sculpture in high relief, 27 metres (30 yards) long and 6.9 metres (23 feet) high. It depicts Arjuna's penance and the descent of the Ganga.

> What we have before us, is a vast picture, a regular fresco in stone. This relief is a masterpiece of classic art in the breadth of its composition, the sincerity of its impulse which draws all creatures together round the beneficent waters and its deep fresh love of nature.

Immediately next to this there is a small temple of standing Shiva, with Bhagiratha bowing to him. There are ten *mandapas* of the Mamalla style. All of them are known for fine sculpture. The notable representations in some are the figures of Varaha, Vamana, Surya, Durga, Gajalakshmi and the kings and the queens. The Five *Rathas* of the eight monolithic chariots are famous. The next phase of Pallava architecture is that of temples in stone. Those of Ishvara, Mukunda, Kailasanatha and Vaikunthaperumal are but a few fine examples of their period. The temples built after the 10th century show a decline.

The Cholas continued the Pallava tradition. The Vijaya-Choleshvara at Narttamalai is the earliest and the prettiest example.

The Nageshvarma temple at Kumbhakonam is remarkable for its life size sculpture of men and women. The temple of Koranganatha at Shrinivasanallur and of the Murvarkovil at Kodumbalur are other examples of the same style. Tanjore has several fine specimens of a well developed art. The temple of Rajarajeshvara also known as the Brihadishvar at Tanjore and Gangaikonda Choleshvara at a place of the same name are the masterpieces of Chola art. Percy Brown, the eminent art critic observes about these two temples,

> "Each is the final and absolute vision of its creator made manifest through the medium of structural form, the one symbolising conscious might, the other sub-conscious grace, but both dictated by that 'divinity which has seized the soul'."

Another feature of the Chola age is the remarkable bronze image of Nataraja so well-known. Later on, the images of gods and goddesses came to be cast. They show a high degree of skill of the founders and artists.

The Pandya temples are distinguished by the *Gopuras* at the entrance. Temples at Shrirangam and Chidambaram are the notable examples.

Jaina and Buddhist structures are also to be found. Gradually it seems that the Buddhist temples were converted into Hindu temples as Buddha himself was taken to be an *avatara* of Vishnu.

SUMMARY

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE SOUTH:

The early history of the South is scattered in the inscriptions of Ashoka, writings of the ancient Greeks and in the earliest Tamila *Sangam* Literature.

The three states, the Chola, Pandya and Kerala, are referred to in all these sources. However, the regular history of the South starts with the Andhra Shatavahana rule which has been described earlier. After the fall of the Shatavahanas, the Pallavas came to power by the beginning of the 4th century A.D. and ruled for a long period. After their decline, the ancient states came to power once again.

THE PALLAVAS:

Founded by Simhavarma, the dynasty of the Pallavas ruled gloriously over the entire South for a long period. Vishnugopa of this dynasty resisted Samudragupta and forced him to return. Mahendravarma I, Narasimhavarma I, Parameshwaravarma I and Nandivarma II were other noteworthy successors in the dynasty. The Pallavas were engaged throughout in a deadly conflict with the Chalukyas of Badami.

Hieun Tsang visited Kanchi during the Pallava period and he has left a record of the prosperous capital. The Pallavas were great patrons of art and literature.

THE CHOLAS, THE PANDYAS AND THE CHERAS:

After the Pallavas, the three dynasties ruled in succession. Of these, the Cholas were important. Rajendra Chola I conqured all the Deccan and the South and marched victoriously through Orissa and Bengal upto the Ganga. The Cholas were known for their efficient system of administration and their patronage of culture.

CIVILIZATION:

POLITICAL LIFE:

The states were monarchical and had all the features of the states of Northern India. The society was well organised and therefore, the state had little to do except collecting taxes and protecting the social order. Grand and elaborate establishments were maintained by the monarchs. The ministers worked as a body and exercised control over the king. The representatives of the educational institutions participated in selecting the monarch.

Perhaps the most important feature of the South Indian states was their excellent system of local government. The villages and towns were governed by local assemblies divided into several committees to look after all aspects of local life. The fields, gardens, wells, tanks, canals, temples and administration of justice were looked after by the village committees.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

The society was organised on the basis of the *Varnashrama* and the caste-system. The *Brahmanas* were respected by all and there were joint families. Women enjoyed a position of honour and respect. The ladies of the upper classes were accomplished in painting, music and dancing. People were used to a number of comforts in matters of food and amusements.

Temple was the centre of social activities. It gave employment to numerous people and encouraged education and culture.

Agriculture was well organised. Irrigation and care of gardens and animals were the concern of the village commitees. Foreign trade with both Western and Eastern countries was prosperous. The various merchant-bodies established Indian colonies in different parts of the world.

RELIGION:

Jainism and Buddhism were patronised but the dominant religion was Hinduism. Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti were worshipped, and temples and *viharas* were engaged in rendering useful service. A prominent feature of South Indian religion was the development of the school of devotion (*Bhakti*). South also produced great *Acharyas* like Shankara, Madhwa, and Ramanuja.

LITERATURE:

Sanskrit:

In addition to the contribution of the three great *Acharyas* mentioned above, a number of commentaries were written on the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Brahma Sutras*. Great writers like Dandin and Kulashekara, contributed to secular literature.

Tamila:

The early literature is known as Tamila *Sangam* literature. Of the works belonging to this group, ***Ettutogai*** and ***Pattupattu*** are very important. The next group is known as the 18 minor works. Of these, the ***Tirukkural*** is quite popular. It is a collection of moral ideals stated in brief and meaningful couplets. The devotional songs of the *Nayanars* and *Alwars* are considered the best of their kind.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

In the realm of music and dance, art and architecture, the South made significant contribution. The Karnataki music and Bharatanatyam dance are justly famous. In the field of architecture, the Pallava contribution is outstanding. Of the numerous constructions of the period, the temples and Rathas of Mamallapura and temples of Kanchi and the sculpture of the descent of the Ganga and other temples of Ishwara, Mukunda, Vaikuntha Perumal are note-worthy. Equally note-worthy are the temples built by the Cholas and the Pandyas at Tanjore, Shrirangam, Madurai and Chidambaram.

12

CULTURAL EMPIRE

INDIA'S CULTURAL RELATIONS — CENTRAL ASIA — CHINA — TIBET — JAPAN, KOREA AND MONGOLIA — THE WESTERN WORLD — CEYLON — SOUTH EAST ASIA.

INDIA'S CULTURAL RELATIONS:

THE fact that India had cultural relations with the rest of the civilized world since the pre-historic to modern period is well-known. Archaeological remains, inscriptions, accounts of the travellers, writings of ancient historians in different countries and recent researches in pre-history have brought to light the vast extent of India's cultural empire. India's religion, philosophy, sciences, art, architecture, political organisation and social structure have been carried to distant lands and have considerably influenced them.

Almost from the dawn of her history, it has been the privilege of India to carry the torch of her unique ideals to distant lands and inspire them to noble adventures, both in the inner and outer fields of human activity. The culture of India has been like a sky-high tower of light shedding its lustre on the surrounding countries, even on those at the far ends of the earth, illumining the mind of man, exalting his heart, ennobling his life and above all beckoning him on to the realisation of his highest spiritual destiny (Sisira Kumara Mitra).

From the Central Asian centres, Buddhism and Indian culture reached China and Japan. Tibet was a late recipient of Buddhism. The Western countries of Iran, Arabia, Greece, Egypt and Rome also contacted India first by land and then by sea. India's influence over these civilizations has been considerable. The large number of small countries of the Far East and Southern Asia had close contact with India since ancient times through the sea. Because of deep cultural influence of India over these far eastern centres, they are known as Indian colonies. But our culture was spread by peaceful means and not by aggressive conquests. India's relations with these countries may be briefly surveyed one by one.

CENTRAL ASIA:

The region between the Sindhu and the Hindukush mountains was a part of India culturally and politically as well. Some verses in the *Rigveda* reveal that the Aryas in the Panjab had intimate knowledge of Afghanistan. Even the territory beyond the Hindukush was deeply influenced by India. Both the Mauryan and the Kushana empires included all these areas. Ashoka's missionaries spread Buddhism and Indian culture there. The Parthians, the Yuch-chis, the Sodians, etc., were Indianised to a great extent. Even upto the 3rd century A.D. the Oxus was known as the river of Buddhists and Brahmanas. Bactria was virtually an Indian country.

Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang) was the centre of commerce and culture connecting China with India and Western Asia. Kashgar was an important city. Recently a few sites in this area have been excavated with almost fascinating results. Cities with temples and *viharas*, images, wall-paintings, inscriptions, etc. have come up revealing the spread of Indian art, religion, script, political system and actual names of dynasties. The scholars who wandered in these archaeological remains naturally felt that they were moving about in the ancient Indian cities. Khotan, Kuchi and Qara Shahr were important centres of Indian culture.

A Khotani King's name is recorded in a Kharoshti inscription as Maharaja Rajadhiraja Deva Vijita-Simha. Kuchi was also ruled by Suvarnapushpa, Haripushpa, Haradeva and Suvarnadeva. Chandararjuna and Indrarjuna were the rulers of Qara Shahr (*Agnidesha*).

Buddhism was the main religion of these regions. Gomati-*vihara* of Khotan was an important centre. Several *stupas*, *viharas* and shrines as well as the images of Buddha are discovered. A number of Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit, Prakrit and central Asian languages are found. Both the scripts, Brahmi and Kharoshti were used. Some of these texts were lost to India. Secular documents written in Indian languages on wooden tablets, leather, paper and silk are found in large numbers. The style of writing and the scripts suggest that all these belong to the early centuries of Christian era. Sanskrit was learnt from the Katantra grammar. Religious texts and writings on astronomy and medicine are also found. Art of Central Asia (Buddhist Khotan) according to Sten Konow, "remained to the last under the pre-dominating influence of Indian models."

Started early, this cultural and political influence of India over these regions must have continued upto a late period. The Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang who came to India during the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. respectively described the predominance of Buddhism and Indian cultural influence in these territories. They came to India through these regions.

CHINA:

China established her contacts with India from the early period through three routes. One was through the Central Asian regions. The second was through Yunan and Burma. The third was by sea to the South Indian ports. The *Arthashastra*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Manu-Smriti* show an intimate knowledge of China. Through all these routes trade and culture passed to China. Buddhism, however, found its way in the earlier stages through the Central Asian countries. Ashoka's missionaries must have reached the border of China but no definite proof is avail-

able. The first authentic report of the Indian monks received in China is of 65 A.D. Since then Buddhist missions from Central Asia and India have been visiting China. The earlier contacts are yet to be proved. The Indian monks who visited China in 65 A.D. were Dharmaratna and Kashyapa Matanga. They were invited by the then Chinese Emperor, Ming-ti. They carried some Buddhist texts from India and translated them into Chinese.

During the early period of Buddhism, China was more civilized than Central Asia. But there was no organised religion in both of these countries. Hence Buddhism spread rapidly. Chinese scholars and rulers took to Buddhism passionately during the early years of the 2nd century A.D. During the 3rd and 4th centuries numerous monasteries were built and Buddhism was generously patronised by the Emperors. Chinese pilgrims began to visit India soon.

Kumarajiva, a scholar of Indian origin, was the greatest monk who visited China from Central Asia. He was in China from 401-412 A.D. He translated more than one hundred Sanskrit texts into Chinese and preached *Mahayana* Buddhism.

Chushe-King, a Chinese monk started for India in 260 A.D. But he returned from Khotan. Fa-hien, the first Chinese pilgrim to India stayed here during the Gupta period for some years. Che-mong, another monk accompanied by a few others spent 20 years (404-424) in the pilgrimage to India. Twenty-five monks led by Fa-Yong visited our country in 420. Among many others who came to India, Hiuen Tsang and I-Tsing during the 7th century are well-known. On his return to China, Hiuen Tsang was given a great national welcome by his Emperor and the people as well.

From the 4th century to the 6th century, several Indian monks visited China. Definite records are available about eighteen. Bodhidharma, who went to China during the middle of the 6th century attained the fame of a mythological figure. Many miracles were attributed to him. Paramartha, another scholar, went to China in 546 and translated about 70 Buddhist texts into Chinese.

Indian arts and sciences were carried to China along with Buddhism. Images, rock-cut caves and the frescoe-paintings show

distinctly the Hindu influence on the Chinese art. Indian music became popular in Kuchi, China and Japan. Indian astronomy, mathematics and medicine were spread in China by the scholars who visited it. Several Sanskrit works on these sciences were translated into Chinese.

TIBET:

The early contact of India with Tibet is not proved by any authentic record. But according to the Tibetan tradition, the founder of its first dynasty was an Indian. By the first half of the 7th century, a ruler of Tibet, Sronbtsansgam-po accepted Buddhism and many of Buddhist texts were translated into Tibetan. By about the same time Sanskrit was introduced into Tibet.

The Palas of Bihar and Bengal (750-1150 A.D) revived Buddhism in India and spread it again in Tibet. But this Buddhism was mixed with certain native superstitions and still it has remained so. The Tibetans had a close contact with the Universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila. Atisha Dipankara (980-1053) was a famous Indian monk who went to Tibet to preach Buddhism. As in China and Turkestan, we find in Tibet some Buddhist texts that are lost in India.

JAPAN, KOREA AND MONGOLIA:

Through Central Asia and China, and later on through Tibet, Indian culture reached Korea, Mongolia and Japan. There are instances of these countries having made direct contact with India. I-tsing writes that five Korean monks came to India in the 7th century. By the 8th century, when Buddhisena, an Indian scholar went to Japan through China, Sanskrit and Buddhism were already established there. He spoke to the Japanese scholars both in Sanskrit and Japanese. He lived there till his death in 760. The Japanese language shows marked influence of Sanskrit.

THE WESTERN WORLD:

The discoveries at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro prove a close contact between India and the Western countries of Babylonia and Egypt. Turkestan, Baluchistan and Afghanistan were part of the Sindhu Valley civilization. This early contact was maintained throughout the succeeding centuries but there is no definite proof, till a late period. The Indian influence spread over a wide territory reaching upto Central Europe, Greece, Rome, and Egypt. The early contact was established by land-routes through Arabastan and Iran, and later on by both sea and land. The references to sea voyage in the *Rigveda* are clear while the Buddhist *Jataka* tales are quite positive. A Jewish Chronicle records that a trade relation between India and the Western world existed from 800 B.C.

However, the Achaemenids of Persia conquered a vast territory upto the Sindhu and probably crossed it. Alexander the Great took away, among others, Indian artisans, soldiers and philosophers (Brahmanas). But the Indian contact with Iran was close even earlier. The names of kings, rivers, gods, etc., are quite similar to those of the Indians. Several Greek philosophers e.g. Thales (600 B.C.), Herodotus (500 B.C.), Empedocles (450 B.C.) seem to have taken their theories from the *Vedas*. Socrates is said to have discussed with a Brahmana scholar and learnt the theory of the immortality of the Soul. Plato's writings show an intimate contact with Indian thought and seem to support the view that probably he visited India on his cultural sojourn. The *Republic* of Plato is better understood if interpreted in the background of Indian thought. Pythagoras, some scholars think, was a Brahmana by name *Prithviguru*. His famous theorem is found in the *Shulvasutras* of Baudhayana. Prof. Rawlinson states, "Almost all the theories, religious, philosophical and mathematical, taught by Pythagorians were known in India in the 6th century B.C." Another philosopher, Appolonius visited the University of Taxila. Megasthenes records that he found many ideas common to both Indian and Greek philosophies and religions. However, more definite evidence of the later period may also be briefly noted.

The 13th rock edict of Ashoka mentions the names of five Greek rulers of Syria, Macedonia, Corinth, Egypt and Cyrene and that in all these countries Ashoka's *Dharma* was spread. The department of foreigners of the Mauryan administration reveals that there was a large number of foreigners in Pataliputra of that period.

The sea-route between India and the Western World became important after the 3rd century B.C. Indians have left their traces in Somaliport and on the banks of the Nile. The Indian trade with Madagascar and Socotra was pretty voluminous.

The discovery of the 'Monsoon winds' in 45 A.D. caused a revolutionary change in the intercourse between India and the Egyptian port, Alexandria. Prior to this discovery, about 20 ships travelled in a year between the two countries but after it, on an average a ship a day left the shores of Egypt. The peace and plenty of the Roman empire favoured this trade. Pliny the Roman historian records that nearly 50 million gold coins (about half a million sterling) flowed into India every year. The discovery of a large number of coins in South India supports this statement. Political relations were maintained between India and Rome. From the days of Augustus upto the 6th century A.D., specific records of more than ten embassies to Rome are available. Several Indians went to Alexandria and settled there in large colonies. In 470 A.D. some Brahmanas were the guests of the Roman Consul Severus. Indian trade with Rome declined after the 3rd century and seems to have completely stopped by the 6th century.

Next to the references of the *Vedic* period, we hear of India's contact with Persia during the 4th century. From the writings of the Persians and the Chinese, we know that there was regular trade between India and Persia. Pulakeshi II of the Chalukyas of Badami sent an embassy to the Persian ruler Khusrau II about 626 A.D. and the courtesy was returned. Harshavardhana, the great contemporary of Pulakeshi maintained a large stable of Persian horses. Indian navy is mentioned in several Persian records.

The cultural contacts of India with Arabia, though probably ancient, are best recorded during the reigns of Al-Mansur (754-755) and Harun Al-Rashid (786-809). Baghdad was a great centre of commerce and culture and naturally scholars from all the civilized countries met there. Indian literary works, notably *Panchatantra* and *Charaka Samhita* (a medical treatise) were translated first into Persian and then from Persian to Arabic. Al-Biruni states that Hindu scholars who visited Baghdad during the 8th century taught the Arab scholars some theories in Astronomy like *Brahma-Sphuta Siddhanta* and *Khandakhadyaka* of Brahmagupta were translated into Arabic during this period. Indian numerals, use of zero, decimal system and algebra, all of Indian origin, were taught to the Arabs. The Arabs being cultured and intelligent people, took them and developed them and finally passed them on still further to the west. The cultural contact between India and Arabia was encouraged by the powerful ministers of the Barmak family who were converted to Islam from Buddhism. Numerous treatises on medicine, philosophy, astronomy, astrology and mathematics were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic. An Indian physician and scholar, Mankh, lived in Baghdad, cured Harun Al-Rashid of a severe disease and was appointed as the chief court physician. He translated most of medical works into Arabic.

The Arabs visited India for purposes of trade. Their early contact and settlements in India are well-known. The Rashtrakutas allowed the Muslim colonies to be autonomous after the Indian village system. The Arab conquest of Sind and their brief stay in India gave them more opportunities of closer contact. The descendants of the Arabs in India in Malabar are a separate community *Moplahs*. It is not known whether the founder of Islam had any knowledge of India's religions and culture. Some sentences in *Koran* are quite similar to those in the Upanishads. The ancient Jews certainly came into contact with the Indian scholars who visited the West Asian countries. The Christian principles and theology are deeply influenced by Buddhism. The Gospel story in the Bible bears striking resemblances with the life of Buddha given in *Lalitavistara*.

Will Durant, in his *Story of Civilization* gratefully summarises the debt the Western World owes to India, thus:

> India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of our languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathemathics; mother, through Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all.

CEYLON:

The island of the south, known as Lanka (Dvipa) is a part of India geographically and culturally. The history also is bound up closely with that of India. The legendary history of Ceylon goes back to the remote past but real history as such starts at a later date. The original inhabitants of this island are still represented by *Veddas*, a tribe occupying the Eastern portion. Indians of Tamilnad, Orissa and Gujarat settled in Ceylon very early. The island thus was occupied by a civilized population and had close contacts with India. By 246 B.C. Ashoka sent his son Mahindra and his daughter Sanghamitra to propagate Buddha's teachings. They planted the sacred Bodhi tree and the religion of *Shakyamuni* was enthusiastically welcomed by the Sinhalese. Devanampiya Tissa, one of the Kings of Ceylon is remembered by the monasteries and *Dagobas* built under his patronage. The Tamilas occupied Ceylon very early and ruled it from 189 to 145 B.C. The power was captured by the Sinhalese King Duttugemunu (101-77 B.C.). The gigantic *dagobas* of Runaveli and Mirisvetiya testify to his glory and power.

Fa-hien who visited Ceylon during the 5th century found Anuradhapura, in its highest glory. The history of Ceylon is again obscure upto 1003 when the Cholas occupied it for a century and a half.

The Sinhalese Buddhist literature, *Dipavamsha* and *Mahavamsha*, monasteries and *dagobas*, their ethical notions, vast irrigation schemes and perfect peace and order maintained in the kingdom — all these testify to the influence of India on Ceylon.

SOUTH EAST ASIA:

The cultural influence of India on the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and the East Indies is definitely more marked than that on the Western World. Besides the reference in the *Jatakas*, the *Brihatkatha* and the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* by an unknown Greek sailor, numerous inscriptions, monuments and other ruins discovered in those parts eloquently speak of their Indianisation. The political, social, religious and cultural life of those islands closely resembles Indian life in every detail. A brief survey of the political and cultural history of these islands will justify these remarks.

The Indian contact with the Eastern islands (*Suvarnabhumi*) began during the 3rd century B.C. or even earlier. The names such as *Takkola* (Market of cardomoms), *Karpuradvipa* (Island of camphor), *Narikeladvipa* (Island of coconut), *Kanakapuri* in *Dvipantara* (Malaya), *Suvarnadvipa* (Sumatra) suggest that Indians were attracted by the rich and profitable commodities available in these islands. By the second century A.D. Hindu political power was extended even to the remotest parts of Indo-China. The entire region of South East Asia, according to the local traditions, came under political dynasties founded by Indians.

A Hindu prince, Kaundinya, was the first important king known to us. He established the Kingdom of Kamboja (Cambodia) known also as Fu-nan, sometime in the 1st century A.D. Since then Hindu kings ruled upto the 14th century. Champa (Annam) was another Hindu kingdom with its capital, Champanagari (now known as Tra-Kieu). Founded by Shri Mara by the 2nd century A.D., this Hindu dynasty remained in power for a long time. The kingdoms of Shrikshetra and Dwaravati in Lower Burma and Siam respectively are notable. Yunan was known as Gandhara and a part of it was called Videha-rajya. So also East Indies, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Bali were ruled by different Hindu dynasties. About the 8th century the Shailendras built up a mighty empire in the Malaya Peninsula which included Sumatra, Java and Bali.

The society in Java, Sumatra, Champa and other islands was

based on *Varnashrama dharma*. Literary and epigraphic references to the term, *Varnashrama dharma*, the four classes, and their rules of marriage prove this fact. Inter-caste marriages were allowed according to the *Manusmriti* but a woman marrying a man of lower caste was punishable with death-sentence. *Shudras* were also gradually taking to agriculture and crafts. The caste system, as in India of that period, was rather fluid here also. *Vaishyas*, mainly merchants, occasionally dabbled in politics. The *Kshatriyas* were rulers and soldiers. The Brahmanas were devoted to learning and education and, they must have done their job with quite a missionary zeal. The culture of these islands reveals the spread of education as well as its high standard.

The women enjoyed full freedom and occupied a position of honour. Gunapriya, a married lady, ruled Eastern Java in her own rights. Some dynasties seemed to be matrilineal where the throne passed on from the mother to the daughter. Several high offices were held by ladies and officers' wives participated in ceremonial functions. *Sati* was in vogue and later on, it became restricted to the noble families.

Dress was scanty, at least in the beginning. The sculptures show the upper portion of the body uncovered both of males and females. This custom seems to have survived even to this day in Bali.

Hinduism with all its features was widely prevalent, though Buddhism also found its way to a considerable extent. The three important gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were worshipped. Shaivism was more popular than Vaishnavism. Images of Trimurti and Hari-Hara are also found in Java and Kamboja. Sculptures and inscriptions proclaim the intimate knowledge of all the innumerable Hindu gods and goddesses, rites and rituals, *Upanishadic* philosophy and even *Tantric* rites. All the texts of the *Dharmashastra* as well as the two great epics and the *Puranas* were known to them. The Brahmanas, the kings and ministers were respected in Kamboja for their study of religious texts.

Buddhism entered the islands of Java and Sumatra very early. *Mahayana* replaced the *Hinayana* by the 8th century when the Shailendras were in power. The Stupa of Barabudur is an im-

mortal monument of the Buddhist influence. The Pala kings and the university of Nalanda were known to the Shailendras. All the Gods and saints of *Mahayana* Buddhism were found here, with their correct names, forms and *Mudras* (postures). Champa was another centre of Buddhism of which ample evidence in the form of ruined temples and images is available.

We learn from the Sanskrit inscriptions that education was fairly high in its standards. A large number of *Ashramas* (rural universities) were established in these islands. King Yashovarman of Kamboja alone founded one hundred *ashramas*. The local inscriptions give, in full details, the rules of conduct, management, the rare spirit of philosophy and humanism, and other features of ancient Indian literature. These *ashramas* formed the powerful centres of Indian culture.

Perhaps the high standard of education and the spirit of Indian culture imbibed by these people made them tolerant in their religious views. Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side, both respected by the people and their kings. In fact the inscriptions prove that the people of these islands knew the very essence of Indian spiritual life. R. C. Majumdar states:

> They (inscriptions) clearly show that there was in Kamboja, beyond the external forms of religion, that higher and deeper spiritual view of life which is the true essence of all religions, and formed such a distinctive characteristic of ancient Indian culture and civilisation. These inscriptions reveal a spirit of piety and the renunciation, a deep yearning for emancipation from the trammels of birth and evils of the world, and longing for the attainment of the highest bliss and salvation by union with *Brahman*, the ultimate reality. These ideas, which form the key note of Indian spiritual life, are frequently expressed with beauty and elegance, and in language at once stately and serene.

Sanskrit inscriptions reveal an intimate knowledge of all the branches of Sanskrit literature. Religious works such as the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Smritis*, the *Puranas* and the Epics are mentioned. Secular works like the *Arthashastra* and *Kavya* are also frequently referred to by them. Grammatical works of Panini and Patanjali, *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, *Nitisara* of Vishalaksha, *Raghuvamsha* of Kalidasa, *Setubandha* of Pravarasena

Suryashataka of Mayura and *Katha Sarit-Sagara* of Somadeva are some of the important works mentioned in the inscriptions of Kamboja, Champa, Malaya Peninsula and Java. The inscriptions themselves are examples of good literature. They are written in chaste *Kavya* style, rich in allusions, alliteration, figures of speech. etc. They run into several verses, some of them having as many as 218 and 298 verses. Not only grammatical peculiarities but also the complicated rules of rhetoric and prosody are faithfully observed by the authors of these inscriptions. This reveals the extent of education as well as the close and constant contact between India and these far off islands. In fact the glory of the Guptas, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and of the Cholas is reflected in the cultural relations of India with the world. The art and achitecture of these islands also reflect India's glory with equal pride.

The examples of the primitive art as well as of the classical art are found in Kamboja. The early monuments of wood and brick are in ruins and so, much cannot be known about them except that they are similar to the monuments of the Gupta period. Angkor Vat, Baphuon, the temple of Bayon and the town of Angkor Thom are some impressive constructions of Kamboja. The temple of Angkor Vat is a huge, massive monument covering a wide area. The wall of the enclosure is two and a half miles long. The temple is surrounded by a ditch 650 feet wide. The highest tower in the centre is more than 210 feet in height. Perhaps the temple was used for several purposes, as in India, including that of defence. The whole town of Angkor Thom is surrounded by a stone wall and a ditch beyond it. The temple of Bayon, the master piece of Kamboja architecture, is in the centre of the town. The temples are also decorated with skilled sculptures.

There are a number of temples in Champa also. The Buddhist temple of Dong Duong and the Shiva Temples of Myson and Po Nagar are remarkable. All these belong to the Pallava style, much in evidence at Mamallapuram.

The Brahmanical temples of Java were built about the 8th century and are dedicated to the heroes and heroines of the

Mahabharata. These show all the features of the Hindu architecture. Chandi Kalasan, Chandi Sari, and Chandi Sevu are examples of the Buddhist temples. Chandi Sevu is a group of about 250 temples with a big temple in the centre. The eight temples of the Lara-Jongrang group are dedicated to the Brahmana gods. The outer walls of some temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, are decorated with excellent sculptural reliefs depicting the story of the *Ramayana.* They are counted among the best in Java.

Indeed, the greatest of all the monuments is the famous Barabudur of the 8th century. It is a colossal structure situated on the top of a hill, and "regarded as a veritable wonder of the whole world." This Buddhistic construction has nine terraces, crowned with a bell-shaped stupa. The massive structure is beautified with excellent decorations, skilled sculptures and the beautiful images of Buddha.

> It is difficult to name any product of art, either in India or any where else in the world where such a high standard of excellence has been maintained over such an extensive range. This combination of massive quantity and fine quality invests Barabudur with a unique character. It has hardly any parallel in the world, and it may be truly remarked of its artists that "they conceived like giants and finished like jewellers" (Mujumdar).

SUMMARY

India had cultural relations with the rest of the world since pre-historic times. Archaeological remains, inscriptions, accounts of travellers, writings of ancient historians in different countries and recent researches in pre-history have brought to light the vast extent of India's cultural empire. Indian religion, philosophy, sciences, art, architecture, political organisation and social structure have been carried to distant lands and have considerably influenced them.

From the Central Asian centres, Buddhism and Indian culture reached China and Japan. Tibet was a late recepient of Buddhism. The Western countries of Iran, Arabia, Greece, Egypt and Rome came in contact with India first by land and then by sea. India's influence over these civilizations has been considerable. The large number of small countries of the Far East and Southern Asia had close contact with India since ancient times. Because of deep cultural influence of India over these far eastern centres, they are known as Indian colonies. Our culture spread to these far off countries by peaceful means and not by aggressive conquests.

13

ACHIEVEMENTS

FEATURES OF THE HINDU CIVILIZATION — HINDU SOCIETY — HINDU VIEW OF THE STATE — RELIGION — PHILOSOPHY — POSITIVISM AND EXACT SCIENCES.

FEATURES OF THE HINDU CIVILIZATION:

BEFORE we discuss the features of the Hindu civilization, let us try to understand the correct meaning and scope of the terms Aryavarta, Bharata and Hindustan.

The Aryas occupied the middle country in the North and it was hence called Aryavarta — the land occupied by the Aryas. Arya means a noble individual. Any civilized man, irrespective of his race, creed or caste, was called Arya. Thus it is ethical rather than ethnic. The word Arya is used in this sense alone, in all the *Smritis*, Puranas, Epics and other literary and scientific works. Buddha preached Aryan truths. Tyrants, in spite of their noble origin were condemned as "*anaryas*." The Dravida monarches were called Aryas. Thus the term Aryavarta gradually came to be applied to the whole of India and meant a land of the noble people, placing before its inhabitants a high ethical ideal.

Aryavarta was also called Bharata, Bharatavarsha or Bharatakhanda after its illustrious, paramount ruler, Bharata, the son of

Shakuntala. This term is a symbol of the ideal of political unity. The land between the Himalayas and the oceans was regarded as one political unit — the area of the *Chakravarti*. This has been emphasized by poets, philosophers, political scientists and moralists since ancient times. The term Bharata, thus, is a secular term stressing the ideal of national and political unity of the vast Aryavarta.

Later on the Westerners, entering our country through the mountain-passes in the North-West, were impressed by the river Sindhu and named the country after it. But being unable to pronounce the word Sindhu correctly, they changed it to Indus and Hindu. Our country thus acquired the names India and Hindustan. The people living in this country came to be known "Hindus." This term, therefore, is essentially a geographical one. It includes all people of the country without any discrimination based on race, religion or language. At least this was so in respect of the ancient period of our history.

Historically speaking, therefore, the terms — Aryavarta, Bharata and Hindustan are symbols of cultural, national and political unity of India. This point must be borne in mind when we try to understand Hindu culture. It is essentially a national, cosmopolitan and secular culture to which generous contributions were made not only by Brahmanas but also by Buddhists, Jainas, Christians, Muslims and all others who made India their home. The remarkable features of our ancient culture are outlined here.

The first feature of our civilization is its antiquity. It is one of the earliest civilizations in the world. According to some scholars, the Sindhu Valley is the earliest centre of human civilization. Thus this ancient land of our has the proud position of being the cradle that nourished civilization throughout the long centuries of the past. Apart from this prehistoric evidence, the *Vedic* tradition going back to about 5,000 years before the Christian era, reveals a rich and highly developed culture.

Not only is our civilization very old but also it is continuous. The earliest civilizations of the world are four — The Sindhu Valley, the Chinese, the Mesopotemian and the Egyptian. Of these only the Chinese and the Indian have continuous traditions. This is

really a remarkable feature revealing the inner vitality of our culture. It has survived to this day in spite of several onslaughts made on it by many social, political and other upheavels. The secret of this inner strength of the Hindu culture is in its all-absorbing nature which is its most remarkable feature.

Since the earliest times, the Indian people have revealed their capacity for toleration and assimilation of the foreign cultures, civilization and religions. The Dravidas, the Aryas, the Iranian, the Greek, the Shakas, the Hunas, etc. settled in India long ago and lived together in perfect harmony. So also India welcomed the Christians, the Zoroastrians, and the Muslims and gave them shelter when they wanted it. There was no religious persecution in any period of Indian history. On the contrary the Hindus assimilated many of the good features of the foreigners who settled here. The early settlers have been absorbed into the Hindu society. Thus, the Indian civilization, enriched by many, has a diversity of its own, which can be found in no other culture. The Indian people have an almost endless variety of custom and manners, food and dress, religions and philosophies, rituals and festivals, fine arts and sculpture, language and traditions. More remarkable, however, is that there exists, amidst this diversity, a unity based on some fundamental ideals of our culture.

Despite the diversities in matters of every day life, Indians all over the vast subcontinent are united into a single solid society based on cultural, political, economic and spiritual ideals. Ever since the dawn of Aryan civilization, the ideals of justice, universal love, peace, sacrificing one's own for the good of all, purity of character, and respect for virtues have been the standards of human conduct and behaviour. This ethical bond was strengthened by an allegiance to common spiritual ideals. The entire culture of India has been influenced by Hinduism which can give every one poise of mind in prosperity and adversity, courage to face the problems of life, and a vision of one's ultimate spiritual destiny. Hindu society has been preserved by its loyalty to these spiritual and ethical values as well as to institutions based on them. The Hindu regard for the spiritual salvation has been an effective force in reconciling the claims of the different religions and philosophies, ritual and

belief, caste and social behaviour. The Hindus, therefore, realised a high degree of social harmony and co-operation which rendered possible progress in all spheres of life. All-round achievements of the ancient Indians is another striking feature.

India's contribution to the world culture in the fields of philosophy, religion, literature, art and architecture has been adequately acknowledged by all. However, our achievements in social and political spheres and in exact sciences are not yet fully appreciated. Prolonged and painstaking research has brought to light the true nature and significance of our social and political theories and institutions. That the ancient Hindus have made some significant contributions to the exact sciences is also recently acknowledged. Our ancient social ideals are also being accepted now by leading sociologists as their own.

HINDU SOCIETY:

The foundations of the Hindu society were laid down in the *Vedic* period.

According to the Hindus, the society is based on Dharma. Dharma, which is usually translated as religion, is really a much more comprehensive concept. It means that which holds the people together. People are held together by their instinctive nature. sociality. Every individual is by nature a social being and his true or inner being is social. Therefore Dharma means a man's true or inner being. In the field of social relationships, it is sociality. In the field of religion, it is knowledge of the Supreme Being and individual's capacity to see God in every being. Dharma is also moral law without which human beings cannot live together. Because we are moral, we are *just* to each other and therefore Dharma means justice. Thus Dharma is sociality, religion, moral law and justice. All social virtues are fully integrated in this single principle of Dharma.

Action which flows from Dharma is also Dharma as well as are the rules governing the individual life of action. Therefore, Dharma also means duty and positive law . Every individual has a

duty of his own according to his age, ability, choice of profession, position. etc. Thus every man has a Dharma of his own. It is his Svadharma. People of a similar profession or ability are grouped into a Varna. The duties arising out of a Varna are Varna-dharma. So also duties relating to ashrama are Ashrama-dharma. At the same time, every individual has certain duties, irrespective of his varna and ashrama, they are known as Samanya dharma. They are: liberality, non-injury, truth, purity, obedience to spiritual guide, kindness, straight-dealing, freedom from jealousy, etc.

Thus the social organization is based on the scheme of duties which the individual has to perform in the interests of society as a whole. The Varna of an individual is decided not by his birth but by his actions as well as the purpose and manner of his actions. The choice of professions, manner of following them and the standard of judging them, all these were to be decided by Dharma, i.e. the principle that holds society together. In other words, the individual's life was to be one of complete dedication to the welfare of all. This was the ideal and such a complete identification of the individual with the universe was known as Moksha. Moksha, which literally means liberation or freedom from the worldly fetters, really means freedom from the egoism and the union of Atman with the Brahman or the Universal Being. This is the highest ideal of life.

The highest ideal of life, Moksha, can be achieved by a life of Dharma i.e. by doing one's duties according to one's nature, age, ability and situation. Man requires material equipment (artha) to enable him to do his duties efficiently, so also his sensual and emotional desires (kama) must be satisfied. Therefore, dharma, artha, kama and moksha together form one great ideal — *Purushartha.* Man must earn wealth and satisfy his desires in a dharmic way and he will be able to attain Moksha. Thus, the social organization of the ancient Hindus is based on high ideals and it gives a unique meaning to life. The material world is related to the spiritual. The individual is guided gradually to be one with the famly, caste, village, region, nation and ultimately with the universe. This is the inner strength of the Hindu society.

The Hindu scheme of varna and ashrama is based on the concept of a moral being. Every individual is a social and moral being and therefore is free to discover his own dharma. So also every group — family, caste, region, must find its own dharma. This freedom is absolutely essential. While dharma is eternal and universal, its implications are to be worked out by each individual and each group. It is quite clear that the duty of an old man differs from that of a young man, duty of an educated man, from that of an uneducated man, the duty of a rich man from that of the poor. It is left, therefore, to each individual to discover his duties and obligations. How can every man find his own dharma? The ways of knowing Svadharma are four: (1) by referring to the accumulated knowledge of the society (*Veda*), (2) by knowing the tradition (*Smriti*), (3) by observing the conduct of the virtuous people and (4) by satisfaction of his own conscience (*antahkarana*). Dharma is, after all a way of life. It is a code of honour. Every act originating in the good intention of an individual is an act of Dharma.

This idealistic scheme of Dharma is based, as already pointed out, on an assumption of a morally perfect individual. But man is not perfect. He is neither wholly good nor wholly bad. The animal instincts in him often lead him away from the life of dharma. Therefore, it is essential that an erring individual must be disciplined by society. The individual must come to know that his deviation from the accepted moral path is punishable by society. This restraint on the erring individual, the punishment to be meted out to him by society is known as danda. Danda comes as a corrective and that too, only in case of individuals who deviate from their social obligations. Morally conscious men do not need danda or restraint. Danda in other words is that by which the Dharma is enforced. Since it is applicable to all, it can be enforced only with the consent of all. The law of dharma cannot be interpreted and danda prescribed by every or any individual. There must be an agency specially devised to meet this need of society. Such an agency is the state to which we shall now turn.

HINDU VIEW OF THE STATE:

State is an institution created by society to promote dharma. It is based on dharma; its end is dharma, its function is to help individuals to follow a life of dharma. State is, therefore, endowed with the power of punishing the erring individuals. This power is again to be exercised in a dharmic way. State is a moral institution and not an instrument of ruthless coercion.

The Hindu state is thus limited in its authority. It is a functional organization and has only those powers that are necessary for the efficient performance of its functions. The powers and functions of the state are to be decided by the society. The state has to enforce laws promulgated by society. It cannot legislate for society.

Limited as it is in its authority, the Hindu state was regarded as a necessary institution for the promotion of civilised life. It was essential for the protection of the individual's life, property, family and freedom. In the absence of state, there would be no enforcement of law, which leads to anarchy or the rule of the law of jungle or law of the fish (*matsyanyaya*). In such a context, the strong devour the weak. It is the function of the state to restrain the wicked and protect the good. (*Dushta nigraha and shishta paripalana*).

The maintenance of a life of Dharma is not, however, the exclusive responsibility of the state alone. Religious organizations, educational institutions, functional or professional bodies, assemblies of elders — all these share the responsibility of civilizing and ennobling the individual. Each one of them has a way of its own and a danda of its own. State had to respect the sanctions of all these bodies. All Hindu writers on political science enjoin on the rulers to respect the Kuladharma, jatidharma, deshadharma, etc. The role of the state was that of a co-ordinator of all the activities of the various autonomous bodies and to strengthen the dharma of the rashtra.

The state has, according to the Hindu thinkers, seven limbs: The king, the ministers, the army, the treasury, the fort, the people and the ally. Of these, the king was considered to be

the most important limb. After experimenting with several forms of the state, ancient Indians found monarchy to be the best form of government and fully developed it. Incidentally it may be noted that all other civilized nations also adopted monarchy as the only form of government and it survived till recently.

Usually kingship or monarchy is taken to mean the despotism of one man. But the ancient Hindus did not have any such idea. The king was the chosen leader of the people. He was to be in office during the pleasure of the people. He was to be their servant.' King's life was dedicated to the welfare of the people as can be seen from the shining examples of Ashoka. Vikramaditya, Pulakeshi, Harsha and a host of others.

Inspite of the hereditary principle, the number of good kings was much larger than bad ones. The reason for this fact is to be seen in the tradition of training the prince and compelling him to respect the advice of his ministers. The prince was educated in arts and sciences. He was trained to control himself and behave in a respectful way towards the learned, the old and the good. At the Coronation, he was to take an oath of good and just rule. He was to follow a rigid time-table. He was compelled to seek the advice of his ministers at every step. At all costs, he was to keep his people satisfied.

The main function of the monarch was the protection, which included the safety of the individual's life, freedom and property, safety of the country against external aggression, security of the old, the orphans, the sick and such other helpless persons, and finally, justice. For all this, the king had a council of ministers, a body of civil servants, an army, a strong fort and a treasury. He could collect taxes from the people without ruining their sources of income. The king should collect the taxes, says an ancient writer, as the bees suck the honey, as the calf drinks milk and as ripe fruit is gathered from the tree. It was also the responsibility of the king to promote agriculture and industry.

Thus, the ancient Indian state was an instrument of moral and material progress. The state was regarded as a supreme engine of social order. It was, as all other institutions, based on dharma: the king was only a *dharma pravartaka*. In a well

governed state, the Mahabharata says, the people should freely live as do the sons in their father's house.

> Sacrifice of the self, kindness towards all beings, understanding and protection of the people, redress of the aggrieved, and the rescue of the oppressed — these constitute the dharma of the kings.

RELIGION:

Religion is yet another force which binds men together. Belief in God is not a blind faith but an active and reasoned philosophy of life. Hindu religion is not a mere set of dogmas but a series of practical moral values to be realised in life. Religion has always been the backbone of India. During the day of national misfortune it was religion that saved Hindu society from total disintegration. All through the period of India's political decline, saints and mystics have urged her people to arise and awake, and cultivate love of men and devotion to God. India has survived several political upheavels and centuries of foreign domination. We have already explained in earlier chapters the different forms of Hinduism in successive periods. Here we sum up its general characteristics.

Rooted in the *Vedas*, Hinduism has evolved throughout the centuries, on the basis of the moral and religious precepts of many prophets, saints, philosophers, law givers of ancient, mediaeval and modern times. It is a congeries of spiritual principles, moral precepts, practical rules of conduct; it is a way of life rather than a sect or a creed; it is all-embracing, it is based on universal love, tolerance and sacrifice.

In spite of the multiplicity of gods, the Hindus believe in one Supreme Spirit who is the Creator of all, including the gods. Common belief in several hundreds of gods is an indication of the Hindu sense of toleration and belief in the all-pervading nature of the Supreme Being. He is uncreated, self-luminous, eternal spirit, the final cause of the universe, the power behind all force, the consciousness which animates all conscious beings. Religion means the realisation of this Supreme Spirit and this is not a

mere intellectual acceptance but actual experience. Study of scriptures, performance of rituals, or practice of liberality have no meaning without realising God. To know God, according to Hinduism, is to become God. Unless a man has conquered himself, he has to be a victim of pairs of opposites — love and hatred, pleasure and pain, good and evil, etc. He has to rise above all and every man can do it by controlling his senses and there is a divine assurance that every one — including women and children — can do so.

Hinduism is thus, based on the unity and universality of life, and harmony of religions, and aims at the identity of individual and the Universe.

All these are to be practised in daily life. Practice of religion, therefore, is not possible by a weak minded or an ignorant person. The personality of the individual must be fully developed. A rich and vigorous life based on the fourfold ideal — Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, must be pursued. Enjoyment of material goods and satisfaction of emotional and cultural needs, is, thus, an inseparable part of true religious life. A joyous, affirmative, optimistic and creative life is prescribed by the *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the Epics. At the same time, man must not be a slave of passions and pleasures. Renunciation of worldly pleasures and dedicating oneself to social service and upliftment of the common people is regarded as the highest religious duty, because active social service means seeing God in the suffering humanity.

Such excellent ideals have given strength to the Hindu society and religion.

> Religion gives to a Hindu equanimity of mind in prosperity and adversity, courage to face the problems of his life, and a vision of his ultimate spiritual destiny.

Hinduism has a message for the modern India and the World. Max Muller says:

> If one would ask me under what sky the human mind has most fully developed its precious gifts, has scrutinised most profoundly the greatest problems of life, and has, at least for some, provided solutions

which deserve to be admired even by those who have studied Plato and Kant, I would indicate India. And if one would ask me which literature would give us back (us Europeans, who have been exclusively fed on Greek and Roman thought, and that of a Semitic race) the necessary equilibrium in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in short more human, a life not only for this life, but for a transformed and eternal life, once again, I would indicate India.

PHILOSOPHY:

THE SOURCES OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:

The earliest source of our information regarding Indian thought is the *Veda*, which signifies not a single work but a whole literature. This literature consists of two parts, viz., *Mantras* and *Brahmanas*. The *Upanishads* which are the main philosophical inspirations are included in *Brahmanas* but owing to their unique importance in the history of Indian thought, they are treated separately. The celebrated Bhagavadgita contains the essence of the Upanishads.

However, the six systems of Hindu Philosophy can be traced to the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita*.

THE RISE OF THE SIX SYSTEMS:

As rightly pointed out by Dr. Radhakrishnan, "the age of Buddha represents the great springtide of philosophic spirit in India." Gautama Buddha attacked the traditional philosophy of the *Veda*, thus compelling thinkers to reorganise their beliefs. Being assailed by doubts, the Indian thinkers were forced to lay the foundations of their philosophic thought deeper. This resulted in a great movement of philosophy in India which resulted in the rise of the six systems of Indian philosophy. Through these six systems logical criticism and analysis took the place of religion and poetry. The authors of the six systems codified their views and fortified them with their logical defences. Of the various systems that developed during the period of systematization of the *Vedic* thought, six systems became more famous than others, viz.,

Gautama's *Nyaya*, Kanada's *Vaisheshika*, Kapila's *Sankhya*, Patanjali's *Yoga*, Jaimini's *Purva-Mimamsa*, and Badarayana's *Uttar-Mimamsa* or the *Vedanta*. The six systems of Indian philosophy are known as *Vedic* or orthodox systems, since they all accept the authority of the *Vedas*. The systems literally mean "points of view" (darshana). The Charvaka school, Buddhism and Jainism are known as non-*vedic* schools as they do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*.

MATERIALISM OF CHARVAKAS:

The teachings of Charvakas have been a target of criticism mainly because of their materialistic tendencies which ran counter to the Indian mind having a spiritualistic bent.

Charvakas accept perception as the only source of knowledge. They reject verbal testimony as well as inference as solely unworthy. All true knowledge necessarily arises out of experience i.e. perception. And what cannot be gained in perception is not true.

(2) Charvakas accept only four elements -- earth, water, fire and air. They reject the fifth one, viz., space. All the four elements according to them are physical and perceptible.

(3) Charvakas do not believe in any spiritual value. According to them there is no soul, no re-birth, and no hypothetical hereafter. The aim of every individual should be a vigorous pursuit of sensual pleasures and wealth. The oft-quoted notion of the Charvakas is:

> As long as he lives a man should live happily
> And drink ghee, though he run into debt,
> For when the body is turned to ashes
> How can there be any return to life?

Some critics have described the philosopher of the Charvaka school as an advocate of the philosophy of "good digestion and no conscience." Charvakas loudly repudiated the authority of the *Vedas* which upheld the spiritual values. Historically, Charvaka school had its own philosophic importance. But it never captured the imagination of Indian people and has remained a debased doctrine.

JAINISM :

Probably, Jainism arose in the later *Vedic* period and was only revived by Vardhamana, Mahavira, "the great hero" in the 6th century B.C. He is the 24th in the line of "path finders" (Thirthankaras). 'Jina' means a spiritual conquerer. From this the word Jainism is derived. There are two principal sects of Jainism known as Shvetambaras and Digambaras; former are clad in white, the latter go about naked. The latter firmly believe that whoever owns anything is unfit for attaining any salvation.

The distinguishing feature of Jainism is its belief in the eternal and independent existence of spirit and matter, a distinction between *Jiva* and *ajiva*. Jainas, however, maintain that the spirit i.e. *jiva* is only the individual self and not the supreme self as in the *Upanishads*. Jainism does not believe in universal soul or God.

Jiva is considered as eternal substance (*dravya*) of limited but variable magnitude. Our sense organs and physical body are but the limitations of the absolute power of the soul. And our ultimate aim should be to cast off these limitations. Jainism believes in the theory of transmigration of soul. Again Jainism believes *Karma* to be subtle particles of matter which is one of the *ajivas* finding their way into the soul i.e. *jiva* and spoiling it. Souls are divided into higher and lower ones according to the number of sense organs they possess. *Ajiva* is devoid of consciousness and is five-fold. They maintain that all our knowledge concerning reality is relative. Hence it is described as "the doctrine of may be" (*Syadvada*) or "the doctrine of standpoints."

The goal of life is to help soul attain its omniscience (*keval-jnana*). Faith in their teaching, right knowledge and right conduct are the three means to achieve that end. Cessation of *karma* is necessary for liberation.

BUDDHISM :

There is much difficulty in determining the original form of Buddhism as we have no record of it. Buddhism might have

begun as a religion and shortly afterwards became a philosophy in its encounter against Brahmanism. As it is rightly pointed out by Hiriyanna, "Primitive Buddhism represents a new expansion, not against but within Brahmanism."

Buddhism by rejecting over-emphasis on ritualism places all its emphasis on morality. Buddha believed in the persistence of spirit not only here but also hereafter. It is wrong to say as it is often done that Buddha denied the self. He upheld the ideal self. In *Nirvana* he expected the elevation and not the extinction of the self. Buddha's emphasis is throughout on *dharma* in its ethical sense. *Dharma* is described as "the lamp of life": it signifies "perfect conduct and godly living."

Buddhists recognise both external object and self and are thus realistic. Buddhism however repudiates the idea of enduring substance. Self is a continuous stream of ideas. Its explanation of experience makes it look subjective idealism.

Another development on the idealistic side is a 'Nihilism' the doctrine which denies reality to both the external world and self. The logical conclusion of this trend is that ultimate reality is a void (shunya). It excludes all conceivable predicates. Nagarjuna was a great teacher of the doctrine of void. Buddhism showed a split into two sects, *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*. The four noble truths common to both are (i) Life is evil. (ii) Ignorance is the source of evil. (iii) Evil can be evercome. (iv) Right knowledge is a means to removing evil. Right knowledge, right conduct and right concentration lead to *Nirvana*.

Vedic Schools:

The Six Systems (*Shad-darshana*) :

The six systems of Indian philosophy mark the culmination of the Indian philosophical thought. All the six systems are welded together in as much as they all draw from the common reservoir of thought viz. the *Vedas*. All of them tackle the same problems, however, their answers are not the same. Though they all accept the authority of the *Vedas* for which they are describ-

ed as orthodox they are neither dogmatic nor theological systems. The six systems exhibit certain common characteristics:

(I) All systems arose in practical needs. The founder of each system regards *Samsara* (cycle of birth and death) as one misery and affliction and he commended his system as a way of Salvation (*Mukti*).

(II) Belief in liberation (*Mukti*) is the corner-stone of Indian philosophy. Though each school differs in its conception of liberation, yet all believe in the fact of liberation.

(III) The doctrine of *Karma* is another belief which is common to all the six systems. It is the famous doctrine of continuity which seeks to explain the present life in terms of certain antecedents such as *Purva Sanchit* and *Adrishta*.

(IV) The Idea of self or soul better known as *Atman*, is another common feature of all the six systems.

(V) Finally the acceptance of the authority of the *Vedas* is yet another point which is common to them all. However it should be noted that Indian philosophy should not be regarded dogmatic on this account. If the *Vedas* are regarded as final it is so because they are deemed to embody eternal truths which cannot be judged by the yardstick of fallible reason. They are intuitions i.e. revealed truths. They are impersonal. The fact that all the six systems accept the authority of the *Vedas* has not affected the independent line of thinking of the founder of every school of thought. They tackle the problems in their own way. They offer their own solutions and finally point out that their solutions are worthy of acceptance because they are in conformity with the *Vedas*. This procedure has accounted for the ample variety found in the six systems of Indian philosophy.

The charge of dogmatism often levelled against Indian philosophy by the Western critics is really unfounded and misconceived. The very fact that we come across such theories as monism of Shankara, pluralism of Kanada and Jaimini, dualism of Kapila, theism of Ramanuja, atheism of Kapila, realism of Kanad, absolute idealism of Shankara, logical realism of Gautama, in the six systems of Indian philosophy despite their acceptance of the authority of the *Vedas* is itself sufficient to disprove the charge.

Nyaya:

Nyaya philosophy founded by Gautama is an example of pluralistic realism. It is a treatise on theory of knowledge and especially, where it discusses the theory of Logic it excels even the theory of Logic in the West. From the point of view of its masterly treatment of logic — the science of inference — it is held in high esteem.

As regards metaphysics, it postulates 16 ultimate '*padarthas*' the chief among them being substance, quality, relations, non-existence, etc. These independent principles are the component parts of this world of existence. To the Nyaya thinkers, the question of knowing reality is more important than the being of reality. Hence they elaborately discuss the theory of knowledge.

In the first part, they discuss the sources of knowledge such as perception, inference, comparison and *Shabda.* They enumerate the various kinds of perception such as determinate and indeterminate. Then they elaborately discuss the theory of inference. The Nyaya syllogism is one which far excels the Aristotelian syllogism. The stock example of Nyaya syllogism is:

The hill is on fire
because of smoke
Wherever there is smoke, there is fire
As for example in kitchen
And therefore it is so here.

This syllogism combines both the inductive and deductive elements in reasoning. Besides it differs structually from the Aristotelian syllogism. Then follows the discussion about the different kinds of fallacies. As regards causation the Nyaya thinkers believe that the effect is not present in the cause. It is called as '*Asat-karya vada.*' They conceive the stage of liberation as one where there is cessation of all feelings.

Vaisheshika:

Vaisheshika system was founded by Kanada. It is an exam-

ple of rationalistic and scientific outlook in Indian philosophy. It is often described as 'Atomistic pluralism.'

The Vaishshika conception of the world is that it is composed of innumerable atoms. An atom is called *paramanu*. It is the indivisible minutest particle. Such innumerable particles combine to form a thing. They also accept the 16 *padarthas* postulated by *Nyaya*. These infinite number of atoms exist independently of the observing mind. The atoms have qualitative distinctions and they are spiritual in nature. In both the respects, Vaisheshika atomism differs from the variety of Greek Atomism of Democritus of the pre-Socratic times. Vaisheshikas base their atomic theory on rationalistic grounds.

Sankhya:

Etymologically the word Sankhya is derived from *Sankhya* meaning number. This has some significance in respect of the doctrine of three *Gunas* which the philosophy of Sankhya preaches. Sankhya, however, has come to mean right knowledge and discrimination. According to Sankhya philosophy, worldly bondage is due to ignorance and it can be destroyed only through right type of knowledge i.e. by Sankhya. The founder of this school of thought is one seer by name Kapila. '*Sankhya Karika*' is the main source of our knowledge of the Sankhya system of philosophy. In brief it may be stated as follows:—

Sankhyaites believe in two ultimate principles: — *Prakriti* (matter) and *Purusha* (spirit). The two principles are diametrically opposed to each other. *Prakriti* is the primordial matter which is active but unconscious, *Purusha* is the principle of consciousness but inactive. The two principles are independent of each other.

Prakriti is composed of three *gunas*, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. At first, all the three gunas are in perfect equilibrium. But when *Purusha* comes near *Prakriti*, the equilibrium is upset and the process of evolution starts. The first product coming out is '*Mahat*' then *Buddhi*, then *Ahankara* i.e. ego, then *Manas* i.e. mind, then '*Panchamahabhutas*' i.e. the five elements, earth (*Prithvi*), water (*Apa*), light (*Tej*), Air (*Vayu*) and Ether (*Akasha*), then

the five elementary qualities, the five organs of knowledge and the five organs of action. And these are the products of evolution which go to make the world in which we live, move and have our being.

Throughout the process of evolution, *Purusha* wrongly identifies himself with *Prakriti*. This ignorance results into his bondage and there are infinite number of such *Purushas*. During this evolution, *Prakriti* is evolving for the sake of *Purusha*. Like a lame and a blind man co-operating with each other to get out of the woods, *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are co-operating with each other. Soon there comes a time when *Purusha* realizes that he is distinct and separate from *Prakriti*. And as soon as this knowledge of their separateness dawns upon the *Purusha*, the *Prakriti* retires, the process of evolution comes to a stop, the three *gunas* again attain equilibrium and the *Purusha* is liberated. Liberation, therefore, consists in right type of knowledge wherein *Purusha* realizes his separateness from *Prakriti*. This knowledge is Sankhya. This in short is the essence of Sankhya philosophy. It nowhere makes any reference to God, and preaches dualism of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*.

Yoga:

Sankhya and Yoga are intimately related. Sankhya and Yoga systems are based on the same dualistic metaphysics of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. The difference is that while Sankhya is dualism without God, Yoga is dualism with the emphasis on God. However, the unique contribution of Yoga does not lie so much in its metaphysics as in its ethical discipline. The other systems of philosophy, although different from Yoga in every respect, accept the '8 fold path,' laid down by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*.

The word 'Yoga' is defined as "*Chittavritti Nirodha.*" It discusses the ways and means of completely controlling the modifications of mind. It tries to find out a practical way for self realization. This can be achieved by the self getting itself rid of all wrong identifications. The self which is consciousness, pure and simple, wrongly identifies itself with *Prakriti*. It is necessary

to dissociate self from *Prakriti*. In this sense Yoga means disjoining.

The crux of Yoga philosophy is the 8-fold path which is called '*Ashtanga Yoga*.' Every seeker after truth must pass through a rigorous moral discipline. This moral discipline is known as the 8-fold path, which consists of 8 stages: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dhyana*, *Dharana* and *Samadhi*.

It is the belief of Yoga thinkers that clean and rigorous moral life is a necessary condition of spiritual life. Hence *Yama* and *Niyama* are the rules of conduct which lay down the firm foundations of morally chaste life. Then comes the physical part of the moral discipline viz. *Asana* and *Pranayama* — the physical postures and controlling of breath. Mind is proverbially fickle and by controlling the breath and by holding it we learn the habit of making mind more and more stable. Then comes *Pratyahara* which is a stage of withdrawing the sense organs from their respective objects. For, a man who is a slave of his flesh is incapable of receiving truth. Attachment to flesh makes mind greedy and unstable in which truth cannot be properly perceived. With the *Pratyahara* moral training ends and spiritual training begins. It begins with *dhyana* i.e. concentrating on some object, then *dharana* meditating and contemplating it and the final stage is *Samadhi* i.e. trance where one realizes the highest truth. Samadhi is of two types. In one, there is at least consciousness of the self, in the other even that is lost. The spiritual aspirant is one with the sublime truth.

This training is therefore a necessary practical approach to self-realization. Yoga thinkers felt that God was necessary both theoretically and practically. Practically the belief in God served the purpose of the most proper object of concentration. In the field of psychology, they for the first time, recognised the fact of the influence of the unconscious on the mental life of an individual.

Mimamsa:

Vedanta is often called Uttar Mimamsa, whereas the system of philosophy as propounded by Jaimini is called as Purva Mi-

mamsa. It was ably commented upon by two scholars who arrived at different interpretations of the problem of knowledge: Prabhakar and Kumarilabhatta.

Mimamsa philosophy is pluralistic realism. As regards the constitution of the world it accepts the existence of innumerable atoms. The most important feature of the Mimamsa philosophy is its justification of rituals. It tries to give a philosophic basis to the practice of rituals as they are obtained in the *Vedas*. It also tries to simplify rituals in the process. In this respect, the Mimamsakas believe in transmigration of soul. In other words, soul migrates from one existence to another. If one wants that the soul should be better equipped for migrating into a better existence one must acquire the fruits of *Vedic* rituals. The *Vedic* rituals may not always bring immediate effects, but they are certainly instrumental in bringing about a better life next time. "As you sow, so shall you reap" seems to be their basic ideal which demands strict adherence to Vedic rituals such as *sacrifice.*

Another important contribution of the Mimamsakas lies in the field of theory of knowledge. Along with perception they accept *Shabda* as a better source of knowledge. It is their fundamental belief that knowledge can never play foul to itself. If knowledge in its own nature is valid how to explain the fact of error which is so common an experience of us all? Here Prabhakara and Kumarila differ. According to one, error is due to non-observance of the separateness of two pieces of knowledge. It is the fallacy of omission. According to the other, error arises because the observing mind projects some experiences which are not there in the situation. In this view error is a fallacy of commission.

Vedanta:

Of the six systems *Vedanta* is the most influential. Its chief exponent though not the founder, was a Nambudri Brahmana, Shankaracharya. He was a profound scholar and a devout Hindu. By his sheer power of logic and learning he inflicted a crushing defeat on Buddhist thought.

Shankaracharya's philosophy is rightly described as absolute

monism. It preaches monism i.e. reality is *One* and there is no duality or multiplicity whatsoever; and that reality is *Brahman*. Hence his philosophy is called absolute monism.

The philosophy which Shankara expounded in his commentary on the *Brahmasutras* can be summed up in a sentence. "*Brahma Satyam, jagan mitthya; jivo brahma-eva naparah.*" It means, *Brahman* alone is real, the world an appearance, the individual soul, not distinct from *Brahman*.

The crux of Shankara's philosophy is the unqualified identity of the individual soul and the cosmic principle Brahman, and the negation of the reality of the world of objects. The latter is explained by the doctrine of *Maya*. This description of the world (that it is unreal) does not mean that it is non-existent. It means that the world does not satisfy the ultimate tests of reality which Brahman and the soul do. In this respect world is relatively real: its reality being of an inferior type. Shankara is much misunderstood on account of his doctrine of *Maya*.

He explains the doctrine of *Maya* by postulating three stages of reality: — *Pratibhasika* stage, dream-experience is the first stage which is stultified by *Vyavaharika* stage (conscious experience), i.e. our empirical knowledge of the world in which we live, which experience in turn is stultified by *Paramarthika* stage (transcendent experience) which is the real experience, or *Brahmic* consciousness. Just as on waking up we realize that the dream we had had was unreal, so also on attaining *Brahmic* consciousness we realize that our empirical experience is unreal. Not till then. In short, the world is relatively real. Shankara does not say that it is non-existent. According to him our bondage is due to our ignorance, *Avidya*, because of which we take the world as real and look upon the individual soul as distinct. The moment we realize the identity of soul and *Brahman* we are liberated even though we continue to live.

Shankaracharya is the only philosopher who described liberation as a positive bliss, *Ananda* to be enjoyed here and now and not in any hypothetical hereafter. His doctrine is known as *Jivanmukti*. Brahman according to him is "*Sat, Chit* and *Anand*" i.e. existence, consciousness and bliss — all combined. The en-

deavour of every philosopher should be to realize the identity of *Jiva* and *Brahma.* They are already one, ignorance makes them appear as two.

Vedanta also developed in two other different directions: *Vishishtawaita* or qualified monism of Ramanuja, and *Dwaita* or dualism of Madhvacharya. Ramanuja tried to reconcile the needs of religion with the demands of logic. He thus described *Brahman* as ultimately real to that extent it was under monism. But unlike Shankara he did not preach the identity of *Brahman* and *Jiva.* He described *Maya* as the will-power. He did not consider the world as an appearance but at the same time he said that the world cannot be independent of *Brahman* which he described as *Saguna Brahman*, i.e. one having attributes. In Shankara's philosophy Brahman is said to be attributeless i.e. *Nirguna.* While Madhwa accepts the concept of the *Absolute* — Vishnu according to him — he considers *Jiva* and *Brahman* as two separate entities. His theory is dualistic in this sense.

Philosophy and Life:

By way of conclusion, it is to be noted that the philosophy in India never remained an abstract theory. It was adopted into a way of life, the way of *Dharma. Dharma*, thus, was a practical realisation of philosophy. The term *Dharma* has acquired three meanings: the nature of a thing; sustaining principle of the life of the world and the practice of self-renunciation with a view to the highest self-fulfilment. Thus social life is not only related to the universe but is regarded as the flowering of the individual life.

> Unselfish and unconditional love of one's fellow-beings — which brings the individual to merge himself in the universal, and thus stand above both liberty and authority — is also an ingredient of *Dharma.*

HINDU POSITIVISM:

Till recently, Indian attainments in the field of positive sciences were not recognised. On the contrary, several scholars, foreign

as well as Indian, believed that Indian civilization was one-sided, reaching great heights only in the realm of philosophy and spiritualism. Ancient Indians, it was believed, had no material outlook and therefore they could not contribute to the positive sciences relating to the worldly life and material progress. Quietism and other worldliness were taken to be the main characteristics of Indian culture. Such a belief was mainly due to the ignorance of the Westerners about India's achievements in the past. The early Western Indologists were "charmed" by Indian philosophy and spiritualism and did not try to discover India's positive background. This was again due to the belief that a people devoted to philosophy and spiritualism cannot in any way contribute to or ever understand the positive sciences Western scholars think that philosophy and sciences, spiritualism and materialism, are mutually exclusive. But this is not accepted by the Indians. Since ancient times Indians have believed that matter and spirit are one and the same. To achieve spiritual goal, one must understand matter. Ancient Indian spiritual progress is based on and is the end of material progress. Hindu culture is synthetic.

> The essential point which Westerners and Westernised Indians have to bear in mind," says Dr. K. P. Mukerji, "is that the Hindu culture is through and through synthetic; it aims at the synthesis of the here and hereafter, the world and the other world, the appearance that is *many* and the reality that is *one*, the temporal and the eternal, the positive and the transcendental.

In the context of such a view, the matter itself is spiritualised. People who subscribed to this view could not ignore positive life. They achieved great progress both in the fields of philosophy and of positive sciences. However, only recently the worth and significance of India's contribution to positive sciences are brought to light by scholars like P. C. Roy (*History of Hindu Chemistry*), B. K. Sarkar (*Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* and *Hindu Achievements in Exact Sciences*), B. N. Seal (*Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*), Mitra (*Indian Mathematics*) and K. P. Mukherji (*Hindu Positivism,* and *The State*). Western scholars are not slow to recognise this. Prof. Northrop of the Yale University observes, "the virtues and consequences of positivism

are to be found in the East, not in the West," Dr. Basham of the University of London has given a summary of Ancient India's achievements in positive sciences in his, "*The Wonder That Was India.*" The achievements of ancient India in the sphere of positive and social sciences are so vast that they cannot be summarised in a book like ours. A bare outline is attempted in the following two sections. A few characteristic features of Hindu positivism may be first noted.

Hindu positivism is expressed in the four principles of their sociology and culture. They are: (i) *Dharma*, law, tradition and morality, (ii) *artha*, economics and politics, (iii) *kama*, the cultivation of fine arts, the emotional values including sexology and (v) *moksha*, the spiritual salvation. Thus

> *Moksha* is the final end to which he (the Hindu) cannot step over through a life in a vacuum, but can be attained only through the due performance of social and family duties within a social ethos resonant with the living touch of reality that is immanent as well as transcendent.

Moksha is not just other-worldly. It is here and now, it is to be attained through the performance of worldly duties. *Moksha* is an ideal to be achieved through the other three. "Let no one try to get *Moksha* without trying to acquire the other three, viz., *Dharma, artha, kama*," warns Shukra, "and let him constantly follow the path of *Moksha* without discarding the other three. This is the golden mean in all religions."

The duties of the individual according to the age, occupation and stage of life were fixed by the system of *Varnashrama.* The society was, thus, organised on a rational and an idealistic basis to promote social harmony and unity. A passage in the *Rigveda* is a prayer for social unity. "Let us march in unison, speak in unison, think in unison and pray in unison." The same spirit of unity as the basis of the family, the village, the *sabha, the samiti* and the state.

Such social unity can be achieved only through peace and freedom. Ancient Hindu treatises on philosophy and sciences contain numerous passages exalting peace (*Shanti*), and freedom (*Swatantrya*). *Shanti* is invoked at every step in social life and peace of mind is the first condition of spiritual progress. So also,

liberty of the individual is essential for the realisation of the ideal, *Moksha*. Manu points out that freedom is happiness and dependence on others is misery. He further says, that freedom and *Swarajya* are achieved only through the harmony of the individual with society and his disinterested service.

Thus active social life, full of duties and responsibilities, is regarded as the true path for spiritual progress. The ancient Hindu teachings emphasized self-realisation through a rich life full of experience in all aspects and not by 'life-negating' devices. Hindu philosophy never taught escapism. The realisation of *Atman* was for the strong. (*Nayamatma balahinena labhyah*). "The message of Hinduism is the synthesis of *bhoga* (enjoyment) with *tyaga* (renunciation) — rather of enjoyment through renunciation (*tyaktena bhunjittha*)."

In short, the ancient Hindus aimed and achieved the all round progress of social, political, economic, religious, and spiritual aspects of life. Thus the Hindu positivism was idealised by a social purpose and a life of restraint. Accordingly valuable contributions were made to social sciences like politics, economics, sociology, psychology, history, ethics, etc. and positive sciences like mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, astrology, geography, botany, physiology, etc. The *Vidyas* (sciences and studies) numbered 14 and the *Kalas* (arts and crafts) 64. A brief review of the ancient Indian exact sciences is given in the following sections.

Exact Sciences:

It is difficult to appreciate the contribution of the ancient Indians to the exact sciences without a working knowledge of those sciences. Therefore, an attempt is made here to give only important achievements without going into the technical details.

Theory of Evolution:

The evolution of animal life and particularly of man was correctly understood by the ancient thinkers. The *Brihat Vishnu Purana* states that "the aquatic life precedes the monkey life" and that "the monkey life is the precursor of the human life." The same theory was explained in an interesting way by the Dashavatara

(ten incarnations). But evolution, as everything else, was the manifestation of the supreme spirit (*Atman*) as is testified by *Chhandogyopanishad.*

Cosmology and Geography:

Hindu views on cosmology and Geography are not available in separate works as in case of other sciences. *Puranas* contain some ideas of a scientific nature. The universe, they believed, was shaped like an egg (*Brahmanda*), divided into twentyone regions. The earth was the seventh from the top. The earth was, again, spherical and several estimates of its size were made; Brahmagupta's estimate was as accurate as any given by ancient astronomers.

In respect of geography, much of the writing is lost. However, the accurate longitudes of important places in India are given by some astronomers. The extensive geographical knowledge of our ancestors is testified by military campaigns over thousands of miles, extensive commercial activities, pilgrimages from one end to the other end of India and foreign contacts through sea and land routes.

Astronomy:

Astronomy (*Jyotisha*) was one of the *Vedangas* and as such was developed since the *Vedic* period. However, the later literature on Indian astronomy, as pointed out by scholars, reveals some Greek and Roman influence. Varahamihira, the 6th century astronomer enumerates six systems (*siddhanta*) of which two are foreign systems — *Romaka* and *Paulisha.* Indians took several astronomical ideas from the West and made several advances on them, by their superior mathematical achievements. A few outstanding features may be noted.

The ancient Indian system of constellations (*Nakshatras*) is widely different from that of the Greeks. The Indian system has 27 Nakshatras and nine planets. The highest point of a planet's orbit was called *Uchcha,* which term later on through the Arabs was accepted by the European astronomers as *aux.* The calculations in astronomy were made on the assumption that the planetary system was geocentric but Aryabhatta (5th century A.D.) suggested that the earth revolved round the sun and rotated on its axis. This

did not affect astronomical practice. In addition,

> "the precession of the equinoxes was known, and calculated with some accuracy by mediaeval astronomers, as were the lengths of the year, the lunar month, and other astronomical constants. These calculations were reliable for most practical purposes, and in many cases more accurate than those of the Greco-Roman world. Eclipses were forecast with accuracy and their true cause understood." (Basham).

These were achieved without the help of telescope. Accurate measurement was made possible by the decimal system of numerals, invented by the Indians.

The Hindu calendar has the year with twelve months, each month has thirty lunar days (*tithi*) approximating to 29½ solar days. The month is divided into two parts (*pakshas*) — *shukla* and *krishna.* The year is divided into six seasons of two months each: *Vasanta, Grishma, Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta,* and *Shishira.* The difference between the lunar year and the solar year was made up by adding one extra month after every thirty months. This leap-month (*dvitiya*) was inserted after Ashadha or Shravana generally. Thus the calendar is quite efficient but rather 'cumbrous.' The solar calendar was also adapted to Indian method. The twelve solar months were converted into twelve *rashis* and named after the signs of the Zodiac. The year (*samvatsara*) was a part of the bigger unit of 60 years with 60 different names. Several such units formed one *Yuga* and there are four *yugas*: *Krita, Treta, Dwapara* and *Kali.*

Of the numerous eras founded in India the following are important:

1. The Vikram Era (58 B.C.).
2. The Shaka Era (78 A.D.).
3. The Gupta Era (320 A.D.).
4. The Harsha Era (606 A.D.).

Of these, the Shaka Era has been recently revived by the Government of India and brought into use from March 22, 1957 (Chaitra 1, 1879), with certain modifications that are intended to make reckoning of dates simpler and more accurate.

As in all other branches, the knowledge of astronomy percolated to all classes of men by astrology; the location of the *grahas* and *nakshatras* on each day of the *paksha*, month and year was fixed

accurately in an almanac. The stars and planets were assigned certain powers and effects. Therefore, the days were regarded auspicious or inauspicious on the basis of their ruling stars and planets.

Mathematics:

Geometry and the calculations necessary for the construction of buildings and sacrificial founts were known to Indians from the earliest times. Soon they made considerable progress with the help of the numerical system, and *Bijaganita*, algebra. Thus the system of the nine digits and the zero is the basic contribution of India to Mathematics. This was further developed into the most useful decimal system.

> The debt the Western World owes to India in this respect cannot be over-estimated, says Dr. Basham. Most of the great discoveries of which Europe is so proud would have been impossible without a developed system of mathematics, and this in turn would have been impossible if Europe had been shackled by the unwieldy system of Roman numerals. The unknown man who devised this system was from the world's point of view, after the Buddha, the most important son of India. His achievement, though easily taken for granted, was the work of an analytical mind of the first order, and he deserves much more honour than he has so far received.

Later mathematicians like Brahmagupta (7th century A.D.), Mahavira (9th century), Bhaskaracharya (12th century), and several others made valuable and fundamental contributions to Mathematics. The import of positive and negative numbers, implications of zero and infinity, sound method of extracting square and cube roots, solution of quadratic and indeterminate equations, and calculations in trignometry, spherical geometry and calculus, and astronomy, are some of the important contributions of Indian scholars. Most of these were unknown to Europe till post-renaissance period. Some of them could be understood only as late as the 19th century. The Arabs were among the first to learn from India mathematics and medicine.

Physics and Chemistry:

According to the ancient Indian schools of physics, the universe was considered to be made up of five main elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether. All the elements except ether, were believed to be atomic. This atomism is older than Buddhism and was developed without the help of experimental methods.

> The atomic theories of ancient India are brilliant imaginative explanations of the physical structure of the world; though it is probably mere coincidence that they agree in part with the theories of modern physics, they are nevertheless much to the credit of the intellect and imagination of early Indian thinkers.

Some further progress was made in knowing the qualities and functions of earth, water, heat, sound, etc. Especially in sound the ancient Indians reached great heights very early. The octave was divided into 22 *shrutis* (quarter-tones) and their proportions were measured with great accuracy. Their love of accuracy and precision is testified by their tables of weights, and measures. The measurement of time was, for example, based on the unit of time taken by a wink (*nimisha*).

Chemistry was well developed. Metallurgy, coinage colours, medicine, drugs, poisons and their antidotes discovered by ancient Indians are of a high technical nature. They were able to control foreign markets because of their technical skill. So also iron-pillars, metal-wares, relics of artistic works, archaeological remains, especially pottery and terracotta models reveal their high technical standards. A school of alchemists rose in the mediaeval period, which achieved considerable progress in the study of mercury.

Physiology and Medicine:

The study of human body and medicine had reached a high stage quite early in India. Charaka (1st century A.D.) and Sushruta (4th century A.D.) compiled medical treatises of considerable value. They reveal a fully developed system. Chemistry in ancient India, was a handmaid of medicine and not only of industry as in Europe. According to the Indian system, the body functioned by the five winds (*Vayus*) : *prana, apana, vyana, Udana and samana.* These

helped the preparation and circulation of blood. The body was subject mainly to three humours (*dosha*) wind, gall and mucus. Ancient Indians had an accurate knowledge of the nervous system and could diagnose diseases by feeling the pulse. Several methods of cure were based on *Yoga* — the art of controlling the nerves and the senses. Surgery was developed by them to a high degree. Bone-setting was skilfully done. Plastic surgery was also developed.

The excellence of the medical science of ancient India was the large range of medicines prepared out of animal, vegetable and mineral products. Several medicines have been lost. The use of herbs was of great help in quickly healing the wounds caused in the battles.

The practice of medicine, like all other sciences, was regulated by a code of social ethics. A physician (*Vaidya*) was to be devoted to the service of the sick. Charaka's advice to his students contains the gist of the professional ethics:

> If you want success in your practice, wealth and fame, and heaven after your death, you must pray every day on rising and going to bed for the welfare of all beings and you must strive with all your soul for the health of the sick. You must not betray your patients, even at the cost of your own life. You must not get drunk, or commit evil, or have evil companions. You must be pleasant of speech and thoughtful, always striving to improve your knowledge.

Free-hospitals were opened by the kings and rich merchants. Nursing and attending the sick was considered to be one of the highest service to *Dharma*. The Buddhist monks were known for their service to the needy.

Veterinary science was also developed. Especially the treatises on horses and elephants — their diseases and remedies show a high standard of knowledge. Ashoka opened hospitals for the animals also. An agricultural community naturally loved and took care of all the domesticated animals. Thus the science of medicine contributed its best to the realisation of the unique Hindu ideal embodied in a common prayer:

सर्वेऽत्र सुखिनः सन्तु सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखमाप्नुयात् ॥

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triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. To all this and more, in common with all men. But there is a special heritage for the people of India — not an exclusive one, for none is exclusive and all are common to the race of man — one more especially